



Ensuring improvement happens after inspection in Irish schools

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Overview of workshop



- **Proposals for follow-through to evaluation within the Irish context**
- **Proposals in early stages of evolution**
- **Opportunity to discuss the challenges presented by our context**
- **Explore ways we could enhance our proposals**

Structure of workshop

Education system

The Inspectorate

Information on schools & Inspection

Impetus for follow-through

Follow-through proposals

How could we make it better?

Education system



Primary education

4-6 years Infant classes

6-12 years 1st – 6th classes

Compulsory period
6-16 years

Second-level education

12-15/16 years Junior Cycle

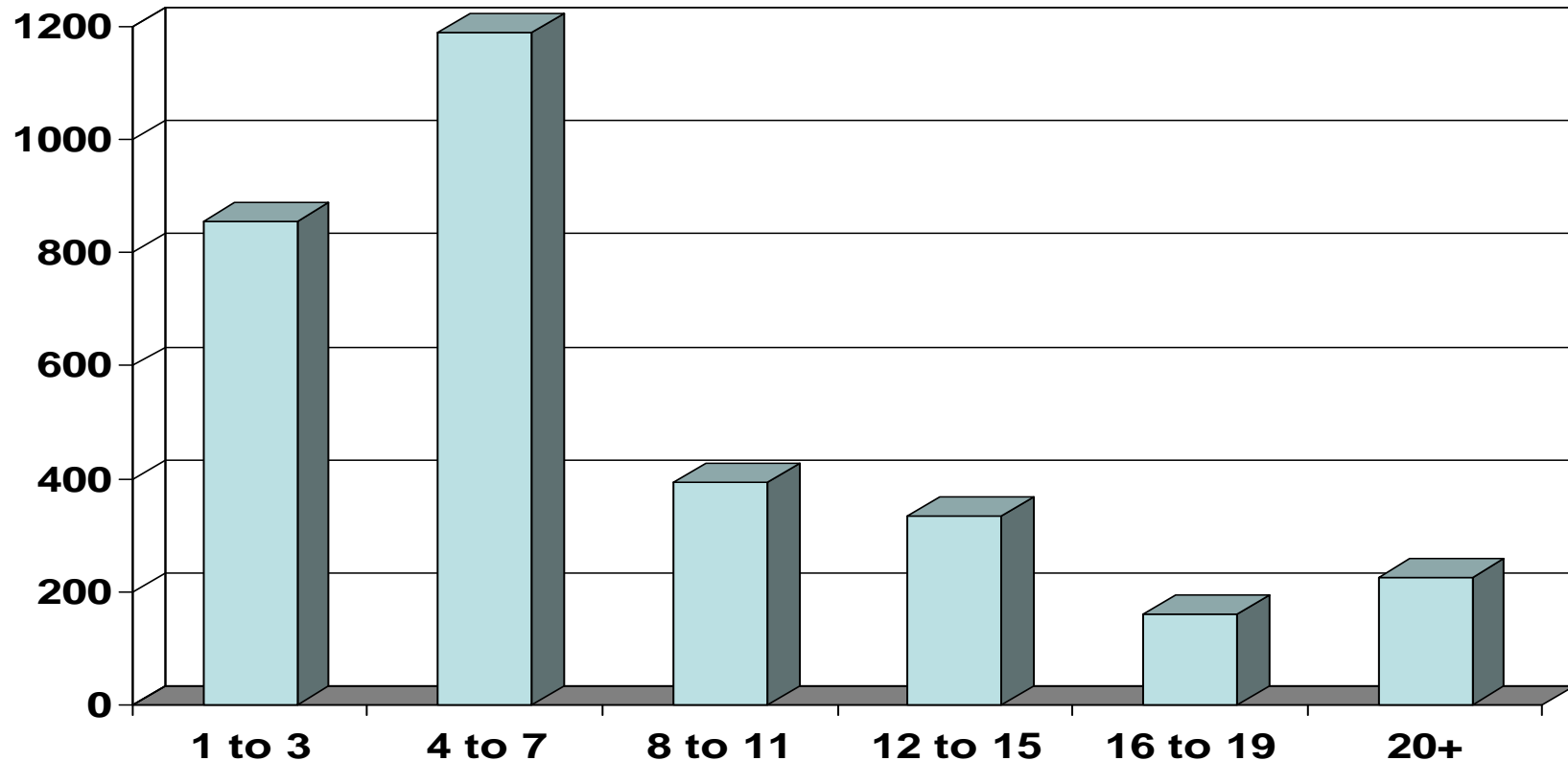
15-16 years Transition Year

15/16-16/17 Senior Cycle

Primary schools
3 160 schools
441 966 students



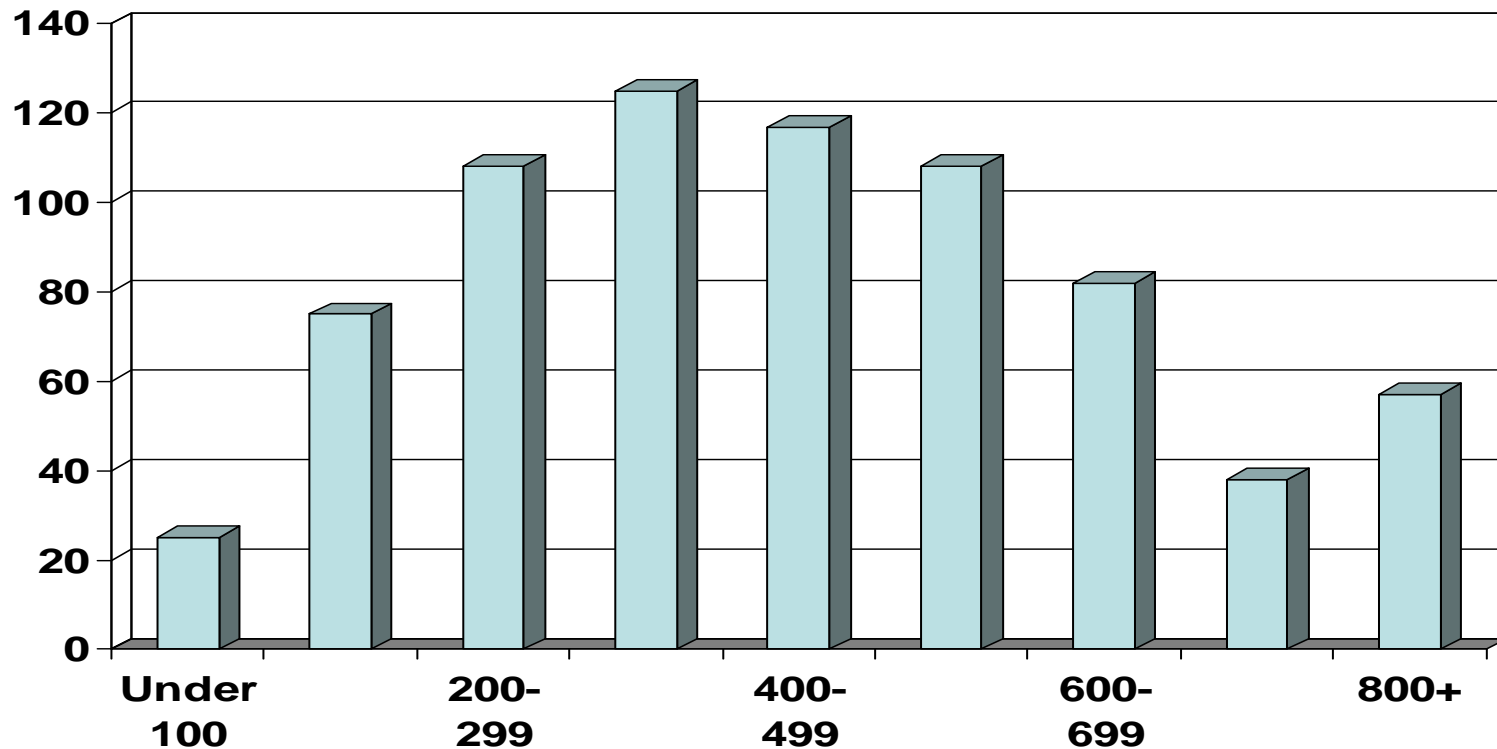
Primary schools by number of teachers



Second-level schools
735 schools
25 387 teachers



Schools by student numbers



Other context factors



Structure

- Education system is highly centralised
- But, most schools locally owned and managed
- Board of school is appointed by patron

Teachers

- Teaching career has high social status and retains confidence of Irish public (OECD, 2003)
- Entry to teacher education is highly competitive and attracts well-qualified candidates
- Teachers' unions are influential in education sector



Standards

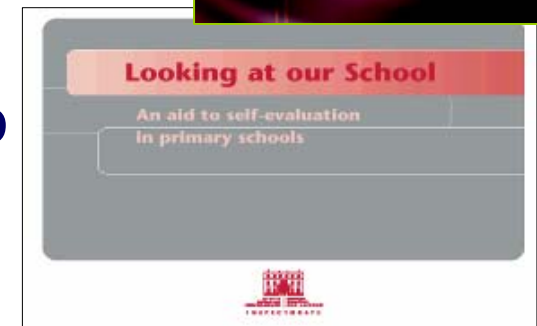
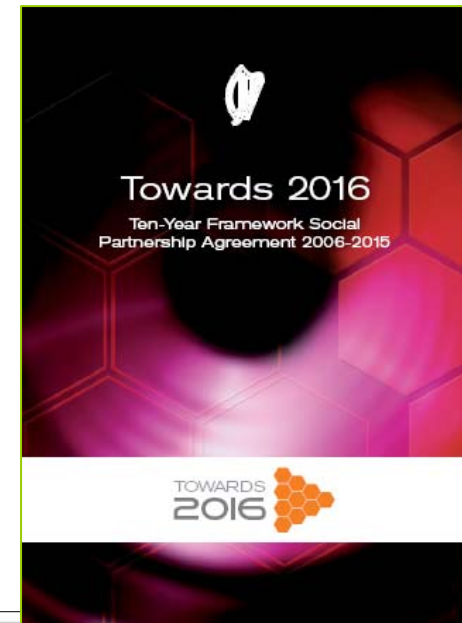
- PISA and other surveys show good standards
- Schools enjoy considerable public confidence

Quality in schools

- Support services available to schools but have grown incrementally
- School self-evaluation not well-embedded

Social partnership

- Social partnership approach in relation to economic planning and social policy development



The Inspectorate



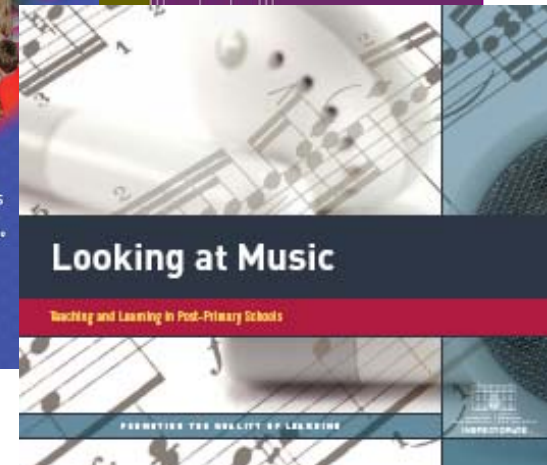
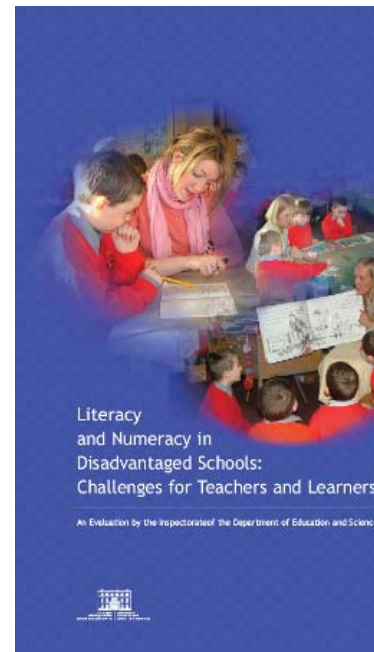
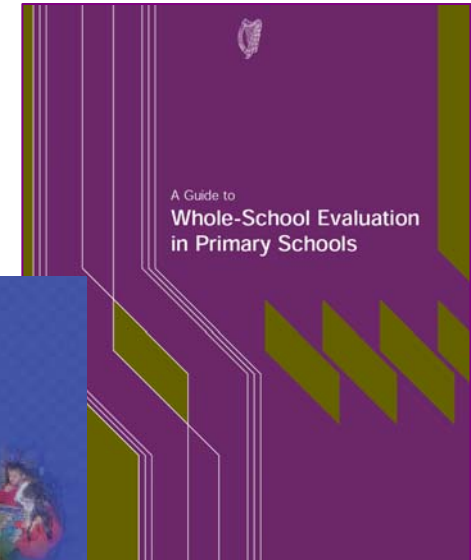
- **Centralised inspectorate**
 - A division of the Department of Education and Science
- **Statutory remit under Education Act 1998**
 - Evaluate the quality and effectiveness of educational provision at primary and second level
 - Support and advise schools, teachers, boards of management
 - Advise the Minister on educational policy and provision

<i>Inspectorate May 2008</i>	Inspectors	Senior management	Assigned elsewhere
Regional subdivision	108	6	9
Policy subdivision	26	6	5

Main inspection models



- Whole School Evaluation (WSE) (all schools)
- Probationary teacher inspections (primary only)
- Subject inspections (second-level)
- Thematic evaluations (all schools)



Information on schools



- Reports from school inspections are published since 2006
 - Opposition to league tables based on exam/test results
 - Publication seen as alternative to league tables
 - Crude league tables published – third level entrants
- Assessment in schools
 - Primary*
 - Tests in reading and maths – 1st and 5th class
 - Scores reported parents but not to Department
 - Second level*
 - Internal school tests and assessments
 - State examinations at 15/16 years and Leaving Certificate

School evaluation



- WSE is the flagship form of evaluation
 - Quality of school management
 - Quality of school planning
 - Quality of curriculum provision (second-level only)
 - Quality of teaching and learning
 - Quality of supports for students

Each area is rated on 4-point scale

Levels are not currently shared with the school

Levels



4	Significant strengths	Very good; highly commendable; of a very high quality; highly effective; very successful; few areas for improvement
3	More strengths than weaknesses	Good; effective practice; good quality; valuable; competent; fully appropriate provision but some areas impacting on student learning require improvement
2	More weaknesses than strengths	Scope for development; fair; provision has evident weaknesses impacting on student learning
1	Significant weaknesses	Poor; clearly unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; requiring significant change, development or improvement to improve student learning; experiencing significant difficulties

Impetus for follow-through



- Better public services / reform agenda / OECD review
- Ownership of improvement agenda in schools
 - Need to ensure boards and teachers took on responsibility for action and improvement – especially improvements with direct impact on learners
- Small number of under-performing schools
- Better integration of school support services to assist change in schools
- Coordinated approach needed from DES and its agencies
- Social partnership agreement
 - Commitments to ensuring school improvement
 - Mandatory school self-evaluation
- International influences
 - Participation of HMle, ETI(NI), Estyn in Irish annual conference
 - Developments in other SICI member countries – GA and seminars

Key features of proposals



- School self-review and improvement at heart of effective school
- Primary responsibility for FT rests with board and staff
 - Must take ownership of need for change and implementation of change programme
- Others may be involved
 - Patron, support services, Department of Education and Science, Inspectorate

Key features



Inspectorate involvement in FT....

- is primarily evaluative
- is proportionate to need
 - concentrated on schools with very serious failings and those with significant problems
 - concentrated on learning outcomes
- will make every effort not to negatively label schools in public
- ensures that normally, those involved in inspection conduct follow-up evaluations

A coordinated approach



- Need to ensure that Department and its agencies take coordinated approach
- Schools Improvement Working Group
 - Chaired by Assistant Secretary & Chief Inspector
 - Inspectorate, Administration sections, Teacher Education Section (Support services)
 - Remit to coordinate DES involvement in FT activity
 - Developing general policy
 - Examines cases of very poorly performing schools and ensures co-ordinated reaction from Department
 - Flow of information from Administration to Inspectorate



- Inspectorate's Evaluation Support and Research Unit
- Analysis of levels over last 3 years
 - For example, at post-primary level, levels from 2005-07 identified
 - 5% schools with significant problems
 - 1.5% schools with very serious problems
 - Analysis cross-checked with inspection team
- Analysis of possible patterns of levels and likely level of follow-through needed

So how will it work?



- Criteria for FT
 - Quality of teaching and learning
 - Quality of other areas (management, planning, supports for students, etc.)
 - Judgement about school's capacity for self-review and improvement
 - Serious compliance issues
- Four possible levels of follow-through
- Determined by inspection team during the post-evaluation work
- Form assists inspection team to record judgement

Quality continuum



Level 4: Significant strengths – No external intervention

Level 3: Strengths outweigh weaknesses: no external intervention but sampling incidental inspection possible

Level 2: Weaknesses outweigh strengths – school support services work with school, some Inspectorate follow-up

Level 1: Significant weaknesses – DES engages with school patron/management; intensive follow-up by Inspectorate

Follow-Through 4



- No Department or Inspectorate follow-up
- School encouraged to use *School Response* to show how it will use report to further its own improvement
- Report and school response published as normal on DES website
- *In future – shorter form of inspection likely*

Follow-Through 3



- Most schools will be in FT 3 and will have no follow-up involvement from DES / Inspectorate
- School should continue with its own self-review and improvement
- School encouraged to use School Response to show how it will use report to further its own improvement
- Schools at FT 3 may be considered for inclusion in sampling follow-up (*short incidental inspection visit*)
- Compliance issues noted in published report

Follow-Through 2



- At post-inspection feedback
 - School told some FT will be required
 - School encouraged to use support services
 - Conversation is on recommendations not on numerical levels
- Following publication of inspection report, **school support services** alerted via Inspectorate and relevant section in Department
- School Improvement Working Group aware of case
- DES requires progress reports in 12 months from school and from support services
- Relevant inspector **may** visit school within this period



- Inspectorate and Department examines progress reports
- Relevant inspector will visit the school and discuss outcomes of visit with principal and chairperson
- Letter
 - stating Inspectorate is satisfied that issues addressed
 - OR stating partial progress is being made, asking for further PR
 - OR recommend re-inspection
- School visit only in exceptional circumstances

Follow-Through 1



- At post-inspection feedback
 - school told some FT will be required
 - conversation on recommendations not on numerical levels
 - school encouraged to use support services
- Schools Improvement Working Group considers needs of school and assistance that may be offered
- Bespoke approach for each case...



- DES/Inspectorate engage with management and/or patron of school
 - Awareness of the need for change
 - Discussion of possible actions
- Support services identified to work with school
- Action plan required within 60 days and progress report within year from school & support services
- Administrative sections in DES aware of case, monitoring of funding and other applications
- Monitoring visit(s) from Inspectorate



- Progress report requested by Department and examined by relevant inspector
- Inspector will visit; discuss outcomes of visit with management/principal/patron
- Re-inspection within 24 months of publication of first report
- If insufficient progress made, SIWVG may consider range of other options
 - Adviser to principal / New board / Retirements

Lessons so far...?



- Inspection systems lead to expectations for follow-up....
- but make sure school takes on responsibility for improvement
- Integration of DES administrative sections, support services and Inspectorate – working and learning together
- Range of inspection models – proportionate evaluations
- Concentrating resources where most necessary....
- but need to show FT arrangements can also reward better performing schools
- A bespoke approach to schools with very serious weaknesses....
- yet attempting to avoid public labelling of school as “failing”

Discussion



- What elements of the proposals do you see as most valuable?
- Are there elements of follow-up activity in your country that you find particularly effective and would recommend to us and to others?
- What are the most effective ways of improving “failing schools”?