SICI Conference, Prague 3 & 4 December 2009

Feedback from Group 4 workshop

What training do school inspectors receive?

- Generally, it is an expectation or requirement that inspectors have sufficient skills in ICT on entry.
- Some countries have a compulsory analysis of ICT skills, for example Sweden where there is a one-hour interview with an ICT specialist.
- There can be a logistical problem in trying to ascertain skill levels, for example Ofsted has many inspectors working under contract.
- Over the last 10 years, skill levels have risen significantly and most new inspectors will have good skills in ICT.
- There is a wide range of training available after entry to the inspectorate, ranging from training that is matched to individual needs through to wholesale training when introducing new hardware or software.
- Inspectors who are office based find it easy to gain advice and support.

Homeworking?

- The main advantages are increased efficiency and a more sustainable way of working (less travelling).
- Homeworking needs good quality infrastructure to support it – the main issues are concerned with connectivity and reliability.
- The disadvantages of homeworking are concerned with social reasons and not ICT, although technical support needs to be good.
- Inspectors should be looking at flexible working at a number of sites, including the office, home and when in schools and not just home-based or office-based.
- Some inspectorates have support staff who assemble all the evidence needed at the start of an inspection, for example, they collate all the evidence electronically and place it on a SharePoint site.

Use of ICT to inform stakeholders?

- In general reports are published on websites.
- There are issues about readability and accessibility of reports – who is the audience?
- Ofsted have a letter to pupils, even those as young as 7 years old.
- Some inspectorates are developing new ways of accessing information, for example in Sweden different stakeholders follow different access routes into the website

If starting to use ICT, are there any recommendations or tips?

- Be very clear about what benefit there will be for conducting inspections. ICT has to improve inspections and avoid using ICT for ICT's sake.
- Care needs to be taken with the information – issue of confidentiality.
- Need to be clear about the rules concerning the hardware – who owns the laptop?
- Also need to be clear about personal data – 'write everything on the assumption that it will be read by someone outside the inspectorate'.