

into



Irish National Teachers' Organisation
Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann

**IRISH NATIONAL TEACHERS'
ORGANISATION'S
RESPONSE**

**To The Department of Education's proposed
changes to the Formal Intervention Process**

Targeted Engagement with Stakeholders on proposed changes to the Formal Intervention Process

Question 1

The FIP will now include an immediate assessment of a school's sustainability, taking account of local area plans. Are there any other factors that should be taken into account?

INTO Comments

The context, background and history of the school need to be taken into account. The criteria used to assess sustainability are limited and flawed. They focus on the school's budget, pupil enrolment and performance but do not take into account any factors, which have led the school to a budget deficit, reduction in numbers or poor performance levels.

Schools in Formal Intervention

Currently a school in formal intervention will have a follow-up inspection within 12–18 months of the original inspection, with a second follow-up inspection within a further 12 months if there has been no improvement in the overall quality of provision.

Question 2

Do you agree that schools in FIP should have one follow-up inspection after 18–24 months?

INTO comment

The school should be given time and appropriate support to address the issues raised before the follow up inspection but one visit should be sufficient. There should also not be any interim follow up visit from ETI as all visits from ETI currently are

inspections and this would in effect increase the inspections to three rather than reducing them to one.

Question 3

Do you agree that a school in FIP which has not improved to at least a 'satisfactory' evaluation at the follow-up inspection (i.e. after 18-24 months) should have further action considered?

INTO comment

It depends on the circumstances leading to the lack of improvement. Again the circumstances of the school need to be taken into account as opposed to a blanket decision e.g. did the school/leadership/teachers receive the appropriate support required to effect improvement?

Question 4

Do you agree that a school in FIP which has improved to a 'satisfactory' evaluation at the follow-up inspection (i.e. after 18-24 months) should have a further follow-up inspection within 12 months, during which time it will be expected to have improved its provision to at least 'good'?

INTO comment

It is important that the school should be given time to address the issues and rebuild their confidence in themselves without the threat of continuous inspection looming over them. As the old adage says 'weighing the pig doesn't make it fatter'.

Question 5

Do you agree that DE should have the flexibility to retain a school in formal intervention following a satisfactory evaluation by the ETI?

INTO comment

If the ETI is functioning as it should be then DE should have the confidence to know that the school is now satisfactory and should not have the flexibility to retain the school in formal intervention.

Question 6

Are there any other circumstances in which schools should be entered into the FIP?

INTO comment

If there is sufficient evidence of a breakdown in relationships in the school or other HR issues then a school may be considered for the FIP.

Question 7

Do you agree that a school evaluated as 'satisfactory' should have up to a maximum of two follow-up inspections (the first after 12–18 months and the second after a further 12 months) to improve provision to at least 'good'?

INTO comment

These schools should have only one inspection in an 18-24 months following. Having the prospect of an inspection hanging over them is not conducive to improvement in the long term.

Question 8

Do you agree that when a 'satisfactory' school is evaluated as 'satisfactory' in two consecutive follow-up inspections further action should be considered?

INTO comment

Schools should not be entered in FIP because they have received a few satisfactory evaluations. Pupils are individual and classes require differentiation to cater for the individual pupils needs. Schools are as diverse as the pupils they teach and therefore the inspection process should be flexible enough to take account of the

diverse nature of our schools and the circumstances they find themselves in at any given time. If we had a supportive ETI they would be able to assist and advise the school how to move beyond satisfactory to good in their particular circumstances as was the case in the past.

Question 9

In addition to restructuring leadership, management and/or governance; amalgamation, fresh start or closure, are there any other actions DE should consider taking where schools have not secured the necessary improvements in provision?

INTO comment

DE need to conduct a proper examination of the reasons for a school entering FIP in the first instance and provide an appropriate support programme for a school to address these issues. This includes addressing areas of concern in relation to the functioning of Boards of Governors.

Question 10

Do you have any other comments on the proposed changes to the FIP?

INTO Comment

The real questions are not being addressed through these proposed changes – Why are the schools not improving sufficiently quickly. Are expectations too high? Are there areas within the education system where changes are required, such as appropriate advice, support and assistance? A system which measures levels of achievement at key stages rather than recognising the individual achievements of individual pupils and the value added by their schools is fundamentally flawed. What is required to raised standards within the education system in the North is a support system that is preventative rather than curative. We also require **real** area planning, where provision over an entire area is examined and appropriate measures put in place to secure access to high level education for all pupils in each area at all

levels of their education from nursery through to post 16. The ultimate aim should be to ensure that **all** children are enabled to reach **their** full potential as individuals rather than schools being driven to produce quotas of pupils at certain levels regardless of the needs of the individual pupils, a system which values.