

## Education and Training Inspectorate



### Induction and Early Professional Development of **Beginning Teachers** in Irish-medium Schools

2007





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A number of quantitative terms are used to present the findings throughout 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%



# INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1.1 During the academic years 2002/03 and 2003/04, the Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) undertook a survey<sup>1</sup> to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the arrangements for the induction and early professional development (EPD) of beginning teachers. The survey included visits to 60 beginning teachers in schools and to 56 in-service training (INSET) courses provided by the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) at both individual education and library board (ELB) and inter-board level. The sample for the survey did not include beginning teachers in Irish-medium (IM) schools. Therefore the Inspectorate carried out a survey in 2007 to evaluate the provision for beginning teachers in IM schools. The findings of that survey are detailed in this report.
- 1.1.2 In 2002/03, 34 of the beginning teachers visited were on induction, moving into year 1 of EPD in 2003/04. The remaining 26 beginning teachers were on year 1 of EPD in 2002/03 moving into year 2 of EPD in 2003/04. In most cases, the Inspectorate made two visits each year to the beginning teachers. Over the two years of the survey, the Inspectorate made 219 visits to the beginning teachers, observed them teaching, and held discussions with them about their induction and EPD programmes. The visits also included discussions with principals, teacher-tutors and other key support personnel in the schools. In addition, the Inspectorate drew on evidence from scheduled school inspections held during the two years of the survey.

## 1.2 IRISH-MEDIUM EDUCATION SURVEY

- 1.2.1 The Irish-medium (IM) sector has a number of unique and distinctive features: it is a young, expanding sector lacking much effective leadership and management experience; there is a relatively high proportion of beginning teachers; there is a large number of small schools and there

1. *The Induction and Early Professional Development of Beginning Teachers, 2005.*

are many teaching principals. During 2007, the Inspectorate carried out a survey to evaluate the provision for beginning teachers in IM schools. This was more limited in scope than the original survey and did not attempt to follow up any of the areas for improvement identified in the original survey for the various teacher education partners at both induction and EPD stages. This report should be read as a supplement to the original report on induction and early professional development of beginning teachers, rather than as a new survey or follow-up survey report. Many of the features described in the original report were found to hold equally true in IM schools. The Inspectorate visited 12 primary schools and one post-primary school, held discussions with principals, teacher-tutors and beginning teachers, and observed the beginning teachers at work in the classroom. In all, the inspectors met 12 teachers on induction and 12 in either year 1 or year 2 of EPD. Of the 24 beginning teachers visited, all except one were in permanent employment or on one-year temporary contracts. The inspectors visited one INSET course delivered by the IM inter-board CASS team attended by 16 beginning teachers, met with the inter-board IM Adviser, and examined written teacher evaluations of other courses.



## SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

### 2.1 STRENGTHS

- The arrangements for the induction and EPD of beginning teachers are effective in a majority of IM schools.
- Most beginning teachers are enthusiastic and hard-working. They are committed to their work and seek advice and support from their teacher-tutor and other experienced staff.
- Good working relationships are established between student teachers undertaking IM initial teacher education courses and the IM inter-board CASS team.
- Almost all beginning teachers consider that they are well supported through induction and EPD.
- The summative report on the completion of induction is regarded as a very valuable resource setting out the beginning teacher's strengths and achievements and identifying areas for further development. It is used effectively to inform EPD in a majority of schools.
- A majority of the beginning teachers' induction portfolios are well organised and contain good evidence of their professional development.
- Most teacher-tutors and CASS officers offer appropriate guidance to the beginning teachers on their Professional Development Activities (PDAs) during EPD. A majority of the PDAs are of a satisfactory or better quality.
- The support offered by non IM-specialist CASS officers ensures that beginning teachers in IM schools have access to comprehensive and intensive support.
- The beginning teachers value highly the dedicated provision of the IM inter-board CASS team and the range of good quality materials and resources supplied by them.
- The beginning teachers visited are making satisfactory or better progress in their professional development.

## 2.2 AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Very few teacher-tutors have sufficient dedicated time to carry out their responsibilities and only a minority have attended recent INSET to improve their skills in supporting beginning teachers and assessing their progress.
- A significant minority of beginning teachers report that they have not been observed teaching by teacher-tutors and experienced colleagues.
- Many of the beginning teachers who have been observed teaching consider that the process is excessively informal and unhelpful, not providing meaningful feedback.
- Very few beginning teachers are provided with a reduced teaching programme, in addition to the normal non-contact time for routine planning, preparation and marking, to focus on their professional development.
- The needs of post-primary trained beginning teachers working in the primary phase are not being addressed effectively.
- A small number of beginning teachers on temporary contracts report that they are reluctant to ask senior colleagues for support in case this is interpreted as a sign of weakness in their teaching by school managers.
- A minority of beginning teachers who have asked for support report that they consider that they were imposing unduly on experienced colleagues who were already very busy with their own work.
- A significant minority of beginning teachers report a degree of isolation during their induction and EPD years.
- The Career Entry Profile (CEP) is regarded as a useful document by only a minority of beginning teachers on induction and a significant minority of their teacher-tutors. The CEP is not functioning as an effective link between initial teacher education and induction.
- Very few beginning teachers have received resources and materials in Irish at non-IM specific INSET courses. A majority of the beginning teachers have not translated or adapted the resources they received in English.





## MAIN FINDINGS

- 3.1 The arrangements to support beginning teachers in IM schools vary according to the distinctive circumstances of individual schools. In half of the schools visited, the principal acted as teacher-tutor and in addition most were teaching principals. In most other cases, a senior member of staff other than the principal was teacher-tutor. One school had assigned a separate mentor to each of the teachers in the school on EPD, rather than using a single teacher-tutor. In another school, the beginning teacher was the only teacher in the one-teacher school and was being supported by a member of the IM inter-board CASS team and the principal of another IM school.
- 3.2 Most of the beginning teachers visited were enthusiastic and committed to their work. They reported that they are willing to ask for support or advice and were confident that their needs are being taken care of. A minority of beginning teachers reported that they considered that they were at times imposing unduly on experienced colleagues, who were already very busy with their own work. A small number of beginning teachers on temporary contracts expressed a reluctance to ask for support in case this would be interpreted as a sign of weakness in their teaching by school managers.
- 3.3 Most beginning teachers demonstrate an awareness of the importance of critical self-reflection and are developing the skills essential to becoming reflective practitioners.
- 3.4 Very few beginning teachers were given a reduced teaching programme to allow them to carry out the activities involved in induction and EPD. This was often as a result of the practicalities of working in small schools which were unable to offer the same flexibility as larger schools. Non-contact time for beginning teachers in the primary phase tended to be associated with the early end to the school day for key stage 1 children.
- 3.5 While a majority of teacher-tutors had received training on carrying out their role, only a minority had received recent, relevant training. Very few teacher-tutors had any dedicated non-teaching time to fulfil their responsibilities, and most used some of the notional time they had for other responsibilities. This results in a lack of quality support for the

work of the beginning teachers. In a significant minority of these cases, beginning teachers were left largely to their own devices.

- 3.6 The school visits carried out in relation to this survey took place in terms 2 or 3 of the academic year 2006/07 and term 1 of 2007/08. None of the term 1 visits took place before the Halloween break. A significant minority of beginning teachers reported that they had not been observed teaching by the time of the visit. In a significant minority of schools, insufficient importance is attached to the formal observation of beginning teachers and to giving meaningful feedback.
- 3.7 Very few of the beginning teachers reported that they had been given an opportunity to observe an experienced colleague teach a lesson. A small number mentioned that they planned to observe experienced teachers at a later date. There is a need to promote a culture of peer observation in schools across the sector. A majority of beginning teachers had had the opportunity to observe an experienced colleague conduct a meeting with parents before carrying out this duty themselves.
- 3.8 Most beginning teachers were overburdened by the need to create, adapt and translate resources, in addition to planning their lessons, assessing, and carrying out their induction or EPD tasks fully. Most of the beginning teachers surveyed have responsibility for teaching challenging, composite classes covering as many as four year groups in the primary phase. In the post-primary phase, all the beginning teachers were teaching outside their specialist areas and one had the responsibility for introducing a new subject into the school curriculum.
- 3.9 The impact of the relative inexperience of the IM sector was evident in a number of ways during the survey. A significant minority of beginning teachers have formal responsibility for co-ordinating a subject, an area of study or a key stage. As reported above, one of the beginning teachers visited during the survey was the only teacher in a one-teacher school and, although she was being well supported from outside, she carried a heavy administrative burden. One of the teacher-tutors visited in the course of the survey had herself only completed EPD the previous year. In one of the schools visited, over one-third of the total staff were beginning teachers; five were on induction and a further nine were on EPD.



- 3.10 The CEP was regarded as a useful document by only a minority of beginning teachers on induction and by a significant minority of their teacher-tutors. While most of the beginning teachers recognised the usefulness of the process of formative profiling during their courses, they reported pressure towards the end of their course to complete the CEP without sufficient time, thus reducing its value as a process. A majority of the beginning teachers who had completed a non-IM post-primary Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course mentioned their frustration during the completion of the CEP because the tutor assigned to assist and advise them had only seen them teaching at the beginning of their course. A minority of the beginning teachers visited in primary schools had completed a post-primary initial teacher education course.
- 3.11 In almost all schools, the summative report on the completion of induction was seen as a very valuable document by both teacher-tutors and beginning teachers. This report sets out clearly the strengths and achievements of each beginning teacher and identifies areas for further development agreed by the teacher-tutor and the beginning teacher, to be taken forward during the period of EPD.
- 3.12 All of the beginning teachers reported that they had had the opportunity to attend CASS INSET for beginning teachers. Almost all expressed satisfaction with the training they had received. Most of the courses were general, non-IM INSET courses. There was a perception that even at the non-IM courses for beginning teachers, IM teachers often made up a majority of the participants, especially in Belfast. Almost all the IM beginning teachers, however, spoke of their frustration at receiving materials and resources in English which then had to be translated or adapted before they could be used. A majority of the teachers made little or no use of the resources.
- 3.13 Those beginning teachers who had completed an IM Bachelor of Education (BEd) or PGCE course valued the useful contact they had with the IM inter-board CASS team towards the end of their course and appreciated the continuing working relationships that had been established.
- 3.14 Most beginning teachers had attended a course delivered by the IM inter-board CASS team on specific IM issues. Almost all considered that this course was most useful to their needs and many helpful resources were supplied in Irish. However, they reported that the CASS officers tried

to cover too many topics in one session. The IM inter-board CASS team should discuss the possibility of delivering a further IM specialist INSET course on an inter-board basis, for beginning teachers in the IM sector, in place of one of the non-IM courses delivered at present.

- 3.15 A significant minority of beginning teachers reported a degree of isolation during their induction and EPD years, despite the support they were receiving. They valued greatly the opportunity afforded at the IM INSET courses to meet and speak with their peers working in the same context and facing the same challenges. There is scope for the establishment of an on-line facility to support and encourage the beginning teachers through induction, EPD and beyond.
- 3.16 According to most of the beginning teachers, their teacher-tutors and the principals, the scheduling of the CASS INSET courses should be reconsidered as they are timetabled together, which can result in a disjointed experience in school for beginning teachers. A significant minority of the beginning teachers were receiving training for the implementation of the Revised Northern Ireland Curriculum, as well as for induction or EPD. In small and rural schools, this created problems for the beginning teachers and school managers. Although problems associated with the supply of substitute teachers for the IM sector have largely been resolved in the case of illness and maternity leave, schools still experience great difficulties when inter-board courses are organised which involve large numbers of teachers from across the sector at the same time.

### 3.17 RECOMMENDATIONS

- All schools need to ensure that teacher-tutors have sufficient dedicated time to carry out their responsibilities and to attend INSET to improve their skills in supporting beginning teachers and assessing their progress.
- All schools need to ensure more frequent, formal lesson observation of beginning teachers by teacher-tutors and experienced colleagues. The first formal observation should take place before the Halloween break in the first term.
- All the teacher education partners need to ensure that beginning teachers are given appropriate teaching programmes which allow for



sufficient time, in addition to the normal non-contact time for routine planning, preparation and marking, to focus on their professional development.

- All the teacher education partners need to ensure that the needs of beginning teachers in small and new schools, and in schools where there are a large number of beginning teachers, are provided for appropriately.
- All the teacher education partners need to ensure that the specific needs of beginning teachers in the primary phase who followed a post-primary initial teacher education course are catered for effectively.
- The higher education institutions (HEIs) need to work with schools and the other teacher education partners to revise the nature and use of the CEP in order that it functions more effectively as a link between initial teacher education and induction. This is particularly timely in the context of the introduction of the revised Teacher Competences.
- All CASS officers need to ensure that the specific linguistic needs of beginning teachers in the IM sector are catered for equitably when resources and materials are being provided to beginning teachers. They should liaise more closely with the IM inter-board CASS team on the content of their courses.
- The IM inter-board CASS team should work with the HEIs and the other teacher education partners to establish an on-line supportive learning community extending across the IM sector.
- One of the courses currently provided by non-IM colleagues should be delivered by the IM inter-board CASS Team on an inter-board basis in relation to the specific IM context.





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