

## Analysis of the consultation on the ETI Complaints Procedure

January 2017

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ETI: Promoting Improvement in the Interest of all Learners



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Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
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## **CONSULTATION 2016: COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

### **Introduction**

From 24 October to 2 December 2016 the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out an online consultation with regard to its Complaints Procedure, which was reviewed in September 2016. The Complaints Procedure is the mechanism for an individual or organisation to make a formal complaint about any aspect of ETI's work.

The purpose of this publication is to provide you with information on the outcomes of the consultation.

### **The consultation method**

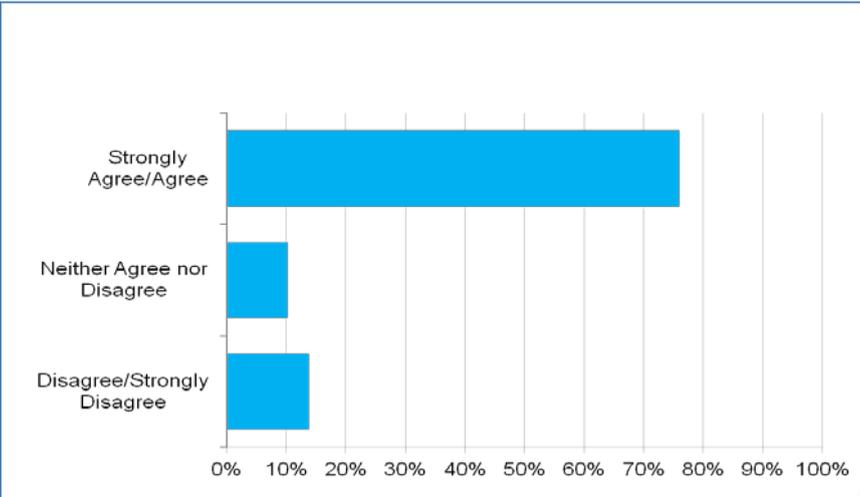
There were 137 responses to the consultation with 31 of the responses from the pre-school sector, 71 of the responses from the primary school sector, 25 from post-primary sector schools and a small number from special, EOTAS and other industry organisations.

Of the respondents, 97 stated they were a principal/vice-principal/senior leader/manager and 23 stated they were a teacher/lecturer/tutor. Responses were also received from governors, teacher/lecturer unions and professional associations and from managing/employing authorities.

**Consultation Responses**

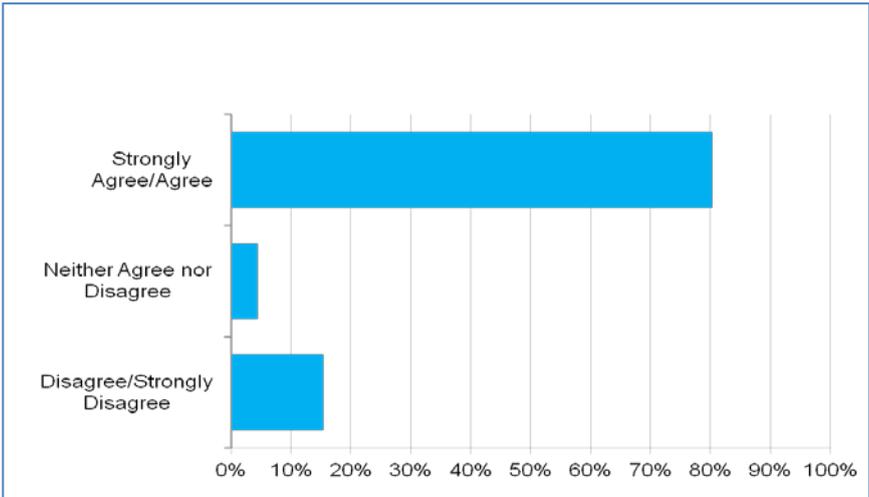
This section provides an overview of the responses to the survey.

- 1. Do you agree that the revised wording makes it clear that the complaints procedure can be used to appeal an inspection finding if you feel that it is not based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection?**



Comments from respondents included that the revised wording makes this clear and is helpful. Some comments from respondents who strongly disagreed included that it should be open to a school or individual to complain about professional judgements.

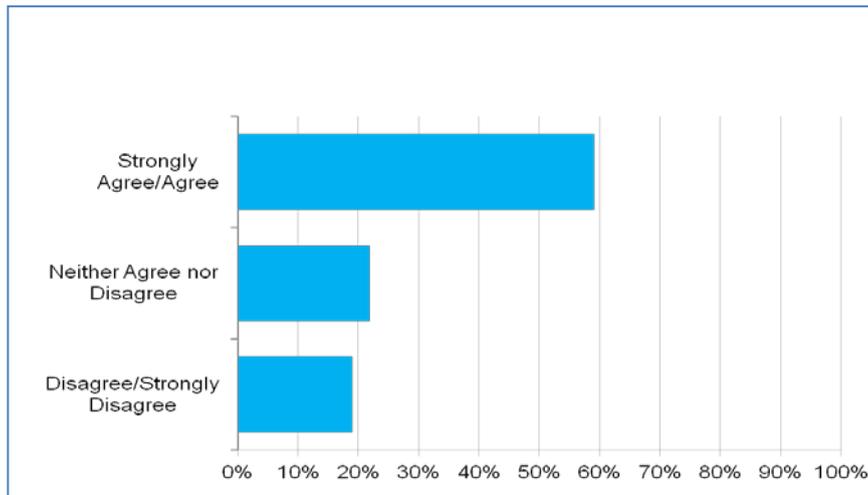
- 2. Do you agree that it would be helpful for the investigating officer to contact you before beginning the investigation or as part of the investigation?**



Respondents supported this and felt the more constructive dialogue that takes place in the earlier stages of a complaint, the less likely its escalation. They also responded that this could be particularly useful if the complainant needs to provide additional or sensitive information and would ensure all are clear about the terms of reference and the information required for the investigation.

Some comments from respondents who strongly disagreed stated that they would prefer the investigating officer to be independent of the ETI.

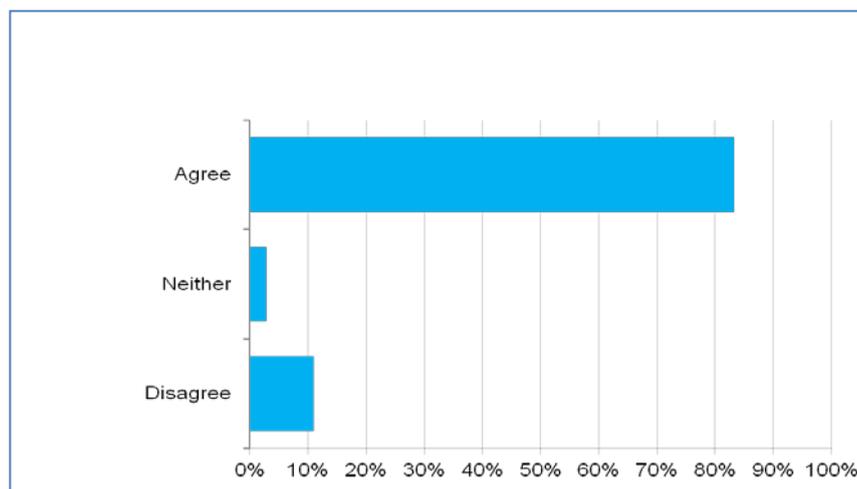
**3. Do you agree that 'inconclusive' should be the outcome when there is a difference of opinion that cannot be corroborated**



Respondents stated that where an inspector has made an evaluation based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection with which there is disagreement, it is reasonable that ETI will rely on the professional judgment of its inspectors. However, where a complaint relates to the personal conduct or behaviour of an inspector, or team, the position is not so clear when there are differing accounts, so inconclusive is reasonable.

Some comments from respondents who disagreed related to the term 'inconclusive' needing to be expanded upon or made clearer.

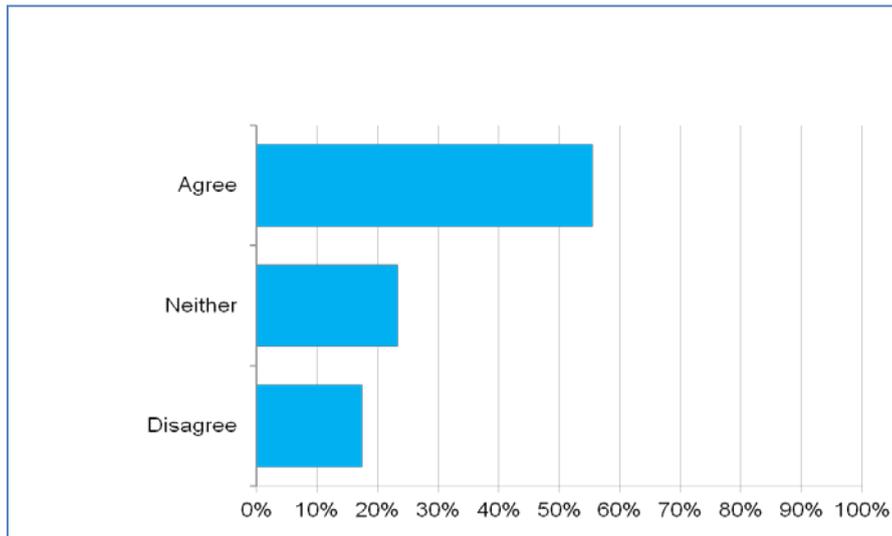
**4. Do you agree that an independent person should be involved at stage 2 of the investigation of a complaint?**



The majority of respondents stated that an independent person would give more trust to all parties especially if they were a serving practitioner from the appropriate phase. It should make the process more transparent and robust.

Of the few respondents that disagreed they responded that they would prefer the whole process to be independent of ETI.

**5. Would you agree to participate in an internal review as a serving practitioner?**



Of those respondents that agreed, they felt the proposal was reasonable and others stated that they would offer to either serve on internal review panels or work with ETI in identifying such practitioners. Some respondents who disagreed felt that it had the potential to place school leaders in a compromising position between fellow practitioners and ETI.

**Conclusion**

Having considered the responses to the consultation, the ETI plans to implement the updated Complaints Procedure from September 2017. By this time an internal review board will be in place to enable a serving practitioner, from the appropriate phase, to be involved at stage 2 of the investigation of a complaint.

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