What are we here today?

- To explain how and why we have changed the way we work with schools and the school system
- To share some key findings from aspects of our evaluation and inspection work during 2010-12
- To reflect on the context in which schools operated
- To help all of us to improve learning for students
Quality assurance in a school system

- Today is about **inspection**....
- But inspection is one critical element in a wider quality assurance system for the education sector

- OECD Framework for Evaluation and Assessment
  - student assessment
  - school evaluation – **inspection** and school self-evaluation
  - teacher and school leader quality
  - research and education system evaluation

* A balanced and coherent framework to support excellence in learning
Overarching themes in our work

- **Clarity of purpose**: an external perspective that encourages school improvement *and* holds schools to account
- **Procedures**: getting the right instruments to ensure evaluation contributes to improving teaching and learning
- **Growing capacity**: developing our own competences and the competences of others for using and understanding evaluation
- **Using results**: organising and sharing evaluative information in ways that facilitate effective use by schools and others; *and* avoiding the mis-use of evaluation and assessment results
So, put simply, what does inspection in 2010-12 tell us about the school system?
In summary, 2010-12 saw...

- The school system operating in a challenging context
- Significant reforms in the work of Inspectorate, with better coverage, and inspections more focused on key elements of schools’ work
- High level of parental and student satisfaction with schools
- Satisfactory or better standards in the majority of lessons but room for improvement in a significant minority
- Evidence that the DEIS initiative is working
- A challenge in the future to make sure we strive to improve weak areas and drive excellence
- Particular challenges in maths at post-primary level and in Irish at primary and post-primary level
The context in which we work: the Irish school system, 2010-12

KEY FEATURES AND FACTORS AFFECTING SCHOOLS AND LEARNERS
Context, 2010-12

- Significant growth in student numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2009/10</th>
<th>2010/11</th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>498,914</td>
<td>509,652</td>
<td>516,460</td>
<td>526,422</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post-primary</td>
<td>341,312</td>
<td>356,107</td>
<td>359,047</td>
<td>362,847</td>
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- Relative stability in teacher numbers

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2009/10</th>
<th>2010/11</th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>31,709</td>
<td>32,489</td>
<td>31,928</td>
<td>32,175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-primary</td>
<td>25,801</td>
<td>26,185</td>
<td>25,808</td>
<td>25,374</td>
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</table>
Context, 2010-12

- Growth in the pupil/teacher ratio

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>2010/11</th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-primary (excl. PLC)</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Average class size in primary schools:
  - 24.3 : 1 in 2010/11
  - 24.8 : 1 in 2012/13
Context, 2010-12

- Spending on education rose in the period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>€3.218 bn</td>
<td>€3.259 bn</td>
<td>€3.263 bn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-primary</td>
<td>€3.070 bn</td>
<td>€3.137 bn</td>
<td>€3.147 bn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Expenditure per student on early childhood, primary and post-primary was above the OECD average in 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-primary education</th>
<th>Primary education</th>
<th>Post-primary education</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>US$ 6,121</td>
<td>US$ 8,384</td>
<td>US$ 11,380</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD average</td>
<td>US$ 5,643</td>
<td>US$ 7,974</td>
<td>US$ 9,014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranking in OECD</td>
<td>10th of 29</td>
<td>8th of 33</td>
<td>8th of 33</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Context, 2010-12

IMPACT OF FINANCIAL MEASURES ON SCHOOLS

- Salary decrease for teachers and other staff
- Decreases in capitation grants by 5% in 2011 & 2% in 2012
- Staffing thresholds changed in primary and post-primary schools
- Non-replacement of promoted posts of responsibility
- Limited alleviation measures for posts of responsibility in schools
Context, 2010-12

- Significant changes in the leadership and staffing of schools
- Spending on SEN resources represented about 15% of all spending: €1.2 bn in 2010; €1.3 bn in 2012
- A range of support services provided to schools
- Very substantial investment in school infrastructure: €1.327 bn over the period 2010-12
- Ambitious programme of reform in curriculum, assessment, evaluation and teacher education:
  - Literacy and Numeracy, Junior Cycle reform; Project Maths, school self-evaluation; reforming inspection
Reforming inspection

EXTENSIVE PROGRAMME OF REFORM AND CHANGE
Reforming inspection

Inspectorate’s role

- to improve the quality of learning for children and young people in Irish schools and centres for education
- to support the development of the Irish education system by providing high quality evaluation and advice
- 3,100 primary schools, 723 post-primary schools,
  141 special schools, 105 centres for education
Reforming inspection


- Introduction of a *range* of inspection models: better tools
  - More efficient whole-school type evaluations
  - Unannounced incidental inspections
  - Revisions to all models to improve efficiency and improve reporting
  - Follow-through inspections

- Significant increase in inspection coverage
  - Inspection of some type in half of all primary schools and in 93% of post-primary schools in 2010-12
  - In addition, inspection of 6,424 probationary primary teachers
Reforming inspection

- More focused inspections:
  - Focus on improvement
  - Focus on teaching, learning, leadership, management
  - Risk-based elements to inspection planning

- Better data, including parental voice and student voice

- Introduction of school self-evaluation to encourage improvement in schools and to complement inspection

- Collaboration with partners

- Very significant work changes for inspectors
Primary schools

WHAT DOES INSPECTION TELL US ABOUT PRIMARY SCHOOLS?
Primary: analysis of evidence from....

- Almost 800 whole-school evaluations
- Over 1,100 incidental inspections
- Thematic inspections in 34 DEIS schools
- Almost 36,000 confidential pupil questionnaires
- More than 47,000 parental questionnaires

- Data simplified under headings
  Inspectors’ findings: “Satisfactory or better” / “Less than satisfactory”
  Questionnaire data: “Agree” / “Disagree” / “Don’t know”
Teaching and learning in primary schools

- 97% of parents agreed that teaching was good in their child’s school
- 97% of parents agreed that their child was doing well in school
- Inspectors judged 86% of lessons were satisfactory or better in incidental inspections; 14% less than satisfactory
Teaching and learning in primary schools

ENGLISH

Findings
- Teaching in 89% lessons satisfactory or better in incidental inspections
- Learning in 86% lessons satisfactory or better in incidental inspections
- Very good outcomes in PIRLS 2011

Areas needing improvement/common recommendations
- Assessment – but improved since earlier report from 2009/2010
- Recommendations about oral language, writing, comprehension, explicit teaching of reading skills
- Teachers’ preparedness to teach
Teaching and learning in primary schools

GAEILGE

- Findings
  - Teaching in 80% lessons satisfactory or better in incidental inspections
  - Learning in 76% lessons satisfactory or better in incidental inspections

- Areas needing improvement/common recommendations
  - Sizeable proportion of schools need to change their teaching approach
  - Use communicative approach, use of language throughout school
  - Richness of language inputs from teacher a significant factor
  - Assessment less than satisfactory in 35% of lessons
  - Need for comprehensive language programme for Irish
Teaching and learning in primary schools

MATHEMATICS

- Findings
  - Teaching in 83% lessons satisfactory or better in incidental inspections
  - Learning in 85% lessons satisfactory or better in incidental inspections
  - Good outcomes in TIMSS international survey in 2011

- Areas needing improvement/common recommendations
  - Assessment – less than satisfactory in 28% of lessons
  - Need for formative assessment and differentiated teaching
  - Use of resources, though increasing use of ICT was noted
  - Collaborative working in only 53% of lessons
Supports for pupils in primary schools

- Satisfactory or better provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs in 81% of schools where WSE conducted
  - Effective implementation of staged approach to SEN provision
  - Good use of assessment information to plan programmes
  - Well structured delivery of supports
  - Clarity of roles and cooperation between class and resource teachers

- Schools’ support and use of resources to support disadvantaged pupils and pupils from minority groups: satisfactory or better in 89% of schools where WSE conducted
Management of primary schools

- Work of boards: satisfactory or better in 88% of schools inspected
- In-school management: less than satisfactory in 18% of schools inspected
- Management of pupils was very highly rated in both incidental and announced inspections (96%)
- Parents’ views: Discipline is good in the school – 95% agree
Management of primary schools

- 87% of pupils agreed that they felt they could talk to a teacher if they felt upset about something at school
- 94% of pupils agreed that they felt safe in class and playground
- However, only 70% of parents felt their child’s school was dealing well with bullying and 24% of parents didn’t know
- At the very least a communication issue
Management of primary schools

- 95% of parents agreed that their child’s school was welcoming of parents
- 92% of parents felt that school reports gave them a good picture of how their child was doing
- Only 70% agreed that the school regularly sought the views of parents on school matters
- Only 65% agreed that they knew about the work the BOM was doing for the school
- 77% agreed that the parents’ association kept them informed about its work
Post-primary schools

WHAT DOES INSPECTION TELL US ABOUT POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS?
Post-primary: analysis of evidence from....

- Almost 190 whole-school evaluations
- Over 1,400 subject inspections & 62 programme evaluations
- Over 430 incidental inspections
- Thematic inspections in 34 DEIS schools
- Over 29,000 confidential pupil questionnaires
- More than 20,000 confidential parental questionnaires

- Data simplified under headings
  - Inspectors’ findings: “Satisfactory or better” / “Less than satisfactory”
  - Questionnaire data: “Agree” / “Disagree” / “Don’t know”
Teaching and learning in post-primary schools

- 87% of parents agreed that teaching was good in their child’s school; 7% disagreed
- 70% of students agreed that their classes were interesting; 16% disagreed and 14% did not know
- 74% of students agreed that their teachers explained things clearly for them and 12% disagreed
- WSE inspections found teaching satisfactory or better in 87% of lessons, problematic in 13% of lessons
Teaching and learning in post-primary schools

- Common weaknesses/recommendations:
  - Use of differentiated teaching and learning activities to suit needs of different students – satisfactory in only 64% of lessons
  - Use of assessment
    - less than satisfactory in 23% of schools during subject inspections;
    - students’ work monitored satisfactorily in 79% of lessons during incidental inspections
  - Collaborative learning – satisfactory or better in 77% of lessons
  - Literacy and numeracy opportunities in lessons – satisfactory or better in 76% of lessons (in incidental inspections)
Teaching and learning in post-primary schools

GAEILGE

- 2012 was first year in which Leaving Certificate oral examination attracted 40% of marks – has helped use of target language – improved since 2007 report on Irish
- Increasing numbers of students taking oral at Junior Cycle
- Many schools encourage use of Irish outside classroom
- Quality of students’ learning problematic in one third (32%) of subject inspections
- Quality of teaching: satisfactory or better in 72% of lessons
Teaching and learning in post-primary schools

Common recommendations/areas for development:
- Need to enrich written and oral language of students
- Stronger focus needed on the acquisition of language structures, grammar and consolidation of newly acquired aspects of language
- Need to use a wide range of resources including authentic materials
- Need to challenge more able students
- Better assessment practices – less than satisfactory in almost 40% of schools
- Small but significant number of classrooms – teachers’ own language skills were deficient
- Better whole school and classroom planning – less than satisfactory in 30% of Irish subject departments
Teaching and learning in post-primary schools

ENGLISH

- Quality of teaching satisfactory or better in 87% of lessons
- Quality of learning satisfactory or better in 84% of lessons
- PISA 2009 data, but subsequent analysis has to be considered

Common recommendations/considerations

- Planning of a good programme of learning and provision was satisfactory or better in 77% of schools
- Junior Cycle curriculum had too narrow focus with limited range of texts being studied
- Lack of opportunities to engage in listening and speaking
- Lack of challenge in writing tasks
Teaching and learning in post-primary schools

MATHEMATICS

- Significant period of change – roll-out of Project Maths
- Quality of subject department planning satisfactory or better in 80% of schools
- 20% of schools had deficiencies in planning and preparation for teaching
- Quality of teaching – satisfactory or better in just 77% of lessons
- Quality of learning – less than satisfactory in 26% of lessons
- Evidence of better transfer of information between primary and post-primary schools
Teaching and learning in post-primary schools

MATHEMATICS

- Common recommendations/areas for development:
  - Planning and preparation
  - Resources used to enhance lesson presentation – should be used to actively engage students in their own learning
  - Considerable scope to improve how students are enabled to recognise connections between mathematical ideas, explore maths ideas in contexts, find multiple solutions to problems......
  - ....not correct answers to well-rehearsed questions in familiar contexts
  - Depth of mathematical understanding required to teach Project Maths is challenging for some teachers
Management and leadership in post-primary schools

- WSE inspections judged the quality of leadership and management to be satisfactory or better in 89% of schools
- 91% of parents agreed that their child’s school was well run
- 91% of parents agreed that their child felt safe and well looked after in school

BUT

- 71% of students and 68% of parents agreed that the school dealt well with bullying and 24% of parents “didn’t know”
Management and leadership in post-primary schools

- **Students’ response**
  - I got helpful advice from teachers when choosing subjects: Agree-58%; Disagree-25%; Don’t know-17%

- **Parents’ responses**
  - I received helpful advice from the school when my child was choosing subjects: Agree-61%; Disagree-29%; Don’t know-10%
  - The school regularly seeks the views of parents on school matters: Agree-44%; Disagree-32%; Don’t know-24%
  - The school’s parents’ association keeps me informed about its work: Agree-51%; Disagree-28%; Don’t know-20%
Spotlights on other themes and topics

- Special Educational Needs inspections in post-primary schools
- Evaluations of target setting and planning in DEIS schools
  - Significant improvement in many primary schools
  - Evidence not yet clear at post-primary level
- Educational provision in Gaeltacht
  - Initial findings from analysis of inspection reports
- SPHE at primary and post-primary level
Making sure improvement happens

- Improvement is firstly, the responsibility of the principal, teachers and board of the school
- School Responses show many take recommendations seriously
- School self-evaluation is designed to make improvement part of normal work of the school
- Follow-up inspections have a role
- School Improvement Group – serious risks to learning and teaching
Making sure improvement happens

- Analysis of 90 of the initial follow-up (follow-through) inspections in primary schools
  - 84% of recommendations partially or fully addressed
  - 15% no progress
  - Further FT planned/recommended in 12% of cases

- Analysis of 80 of the initial follow-up inspections in post-primary schools
  - 90% of recommendations fully or partially addressed
  - 10% no progress
  - Further FT recommended/planned in 14% of cases
Our challenging agenda ahead...

- Continue to make sure that inspection respects the contexts in which we and school communities work and develop
- Continue our own learning and improvement so that evaluation supports improvement and accountability in the school system
- Support reforms the Minister and Department are implementing
- Seek best ways in which we can add value to schools, school leadership and the educational system
- Listen and learn from parents and students
- Identify areas requiring improvement – support and challenge
- Help to ensure that learners experience excellence in learning and teaching
And a word of thanks to...

- The teachers, principals, board members and parents with whom we work in schools
- The education partners that engage with us about our shared goal of improvement
- Our colleagues and former colleagues in the Inspectorate and Department

- And most of all, to the children and young people that we meet and interact with every day