

**National Primary Heads Association , South West
meeting with David Bell, new HMCI
May 23rd , Devon represented by Gordon Aspland**

Mr.Bell has only been in post since the beginning of term but he gave us an insight into the thinking about the future of OFSTED.

General Comments

- He was pleased to report how standards have risen. 96% of teaching in primary schools is now at least satisfactory. There is a significant improvement in leadership and management. There is also a significant impact on failing schools with most being turned around and coming out of serious measures.
- There will be no significant changes to new arrangements. There will continue to be feedback to teachers. Parents' summaries seem to be getting longer so they need to go back to the original idea of just a few pages.
- From September 2003 the theme is evolution, not revolution. He kept saying that inspection would be proportionate to the risk (not too sure what he meant by that !). There will be two types of inspection: *standard* inspection which is just a little longer than the current short inspection and would involve about 70% of schools; and *enhanced* inspection which is the same as the present full inspection and is for the other 30 %. There will still be more frequent inspections for schools in special measures. In the secondary sector there will be 30% standard and 70% enhanced.
- Other changes will include more emphasis on leadership and management; a stronger reliance on school self-evaluation; and a more systematic use of pupil views.

School Self-evaluation:

- A good organisation will always be asking '*How well are we doing?*' and '*How do we know how we are doing?*' These questions drive the DP.
- Inspection is not just about providing management issues, it is also about accountability. Greater importance will be placed on the Headteacher's statement which will be more self-evaluation and evidence based. It will be an indicator to the quality of leadership . The school will be able to choose one area of inspection they would like the inspectors to focus on.
- Self-evaluation is not seen as an industry, with reams of paper. There is more than one way for a school to self-evaluate. We should be evaluating *impact*.
- '*Physician heal thyself*'OFSTED needs to be constantly evaluating itself, it needs to be confident about what it stands for and what it does, and this is achieved by talking and listening.

Primary Schools:

- A greater emphasis on leadership and management, in 1997 50% was good/better and in 2001 74% with only 7% unsatisfactory (17% in 1997). The biggest improvement was in monitoring teaching and learning and the actions taken.
- Mr.Bell agreed that there was a squeeze on the curriculum and offering a broad and balanced one has been difficult. There will be a survey , to be

published this September about this. They will be wanting to develop stronger links across subjects, especially in literacy (back to topics again????) . There will be greater emphasis for leadership in curriculum design. It was stated that schools who do have it right teach longer weeks (is this a hint of things to come ???) .

- Whole school planning was necessary, to also include *how* subjects are taught, not just *what*. Good curriculum design takes a lot of time, there is no quick fix. Showing where you are going, even if it will be a year or two before you get there, is important.
- '*Grey haired revolutionaries*'most successful schools have experienced heads !!
- KS2-KS3 transition : there is still real evidence of a dip in performance from KS2 to KS3 and this is a major area the government is looking at.

Staffing

- Never before have so many teachers come into teaching and then left after just a few years, this is really worrying the DFEE.
- Why ???
 - hard work ? No life outside school ?
 - modern attitudes, no job is for life ?
 - poor pay ?Why is it a problem in some schools but not in others ?? HTs too demanding ?
- Overload.....must make decisions about what *improves* the school, scrap the rest !!

Throughout the session I found Mr.Bell refreshingly candid . I know he has only been in post 5 weeks but I feel we have someone who will listen and take actions. He did start his life in education as a primary teacher , then primary head so he must have some empathy for the job !!

Gordon Aspland
DAPH Link Officer