



# Customer Survey

A report of a customer survey by MORI Ireland on behalf of the  
Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science



INSPECTORATE

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ISBN 0-7557-7340-3

Designed by TOTAL PD

Published by the Stationery Office, Dublin

**To be purchased directly from the**  
Government Publications Sales Office,  
Sun Alliance House,  
Molesworth Street, Dublin 2

**or by mail order from**  
Government Publications,  
Postal Trade Section,  
51 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2  
Tel: 01-647 6834      Fax: 01-647 6843

Printed by Brunswick Press Ltd.

€10.00



## Foreword by the Chief Inspector



The Department of Education and Science is committed to effective planning and policy implementation in the delivery of high-quality services that meet the needs of its customers. This commitment to best practice in service delivery is emphasised in the Department's *Customer Charter*, in the *Strategy Statement and Annual Report*, and in the *Customer Service Action Plan, 2004-2007*. The *Chief Inspector's Report, 2001-2004*, published in April 2005, presented a comprehensive account of the activities of the Inspectorate and reflected the Inspectorate's focus on ensuring the highest standards of service in our evaluative, advisory and policy development work in accordance with our remit.

In 2005 the Inspectorate commissioned MORI Ireland to conduct a formal customer survey, focusing on quality and standards in our evaluation work in schools. The survey provided an opportunity for parents, members of boards of management, school principals and teachers to contribute their views on the quality of the services the Inspectorate provides. The survey focused in particular on professional relationships in the context of school evaluation, evaluation procedures, and reporting.

I am very pleased to present the report of the first customer survey, which found very high levels of satisfaction with the performance of the Inspectorate overall. The survey findings highlight and endorse many of the Inspectorate's strengths: its professional expertise, objectivity, fairness, professionalism, courtesy, interpersonal skills, and oral and written communication abilities. These are core competencies for the Inspectorate, and it is gratifying to learn that our customers rate our performance in these key areas very highly.

The survey findings also indicate some areas in which the Inspectorate could further develop its services, for example in relation to the provision of notice regarding meetings and in further reducing the time it takes to furnish the final written report to schools. The Inspectorate has taken careful note of the views of respondents, which will be very valuable in the development of procedures to further improve the performance of our functions. The survey findings will, I am sure, support our ongoing commitment to continuous improvement as an organisation and the promotion of excellence in the education system.

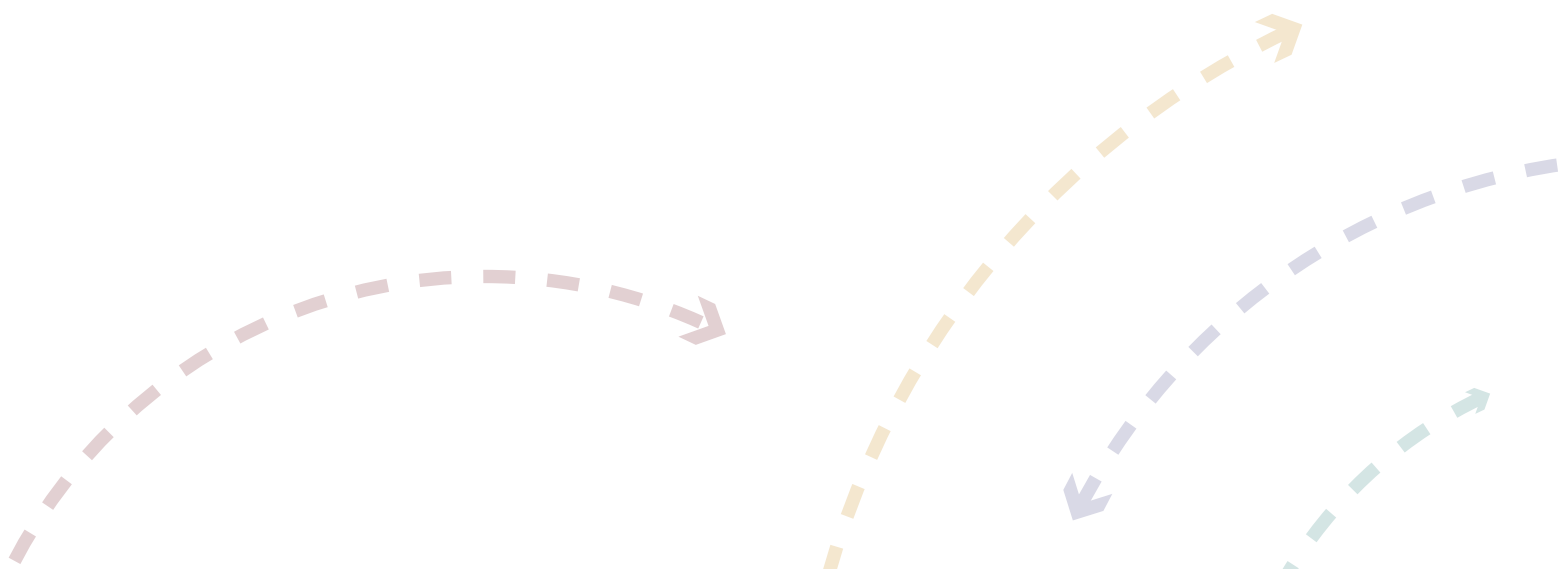
**Eamon Stack**  
*Chief Inspector*

December 2005

## Acknowledgements

Special thanks are extended to all those teachers, school principals, parents and members of boards of management who responded to the postal questionnaire. The Inspectorate is very grateful for the time and effort expended.

Thanks also to the Evaluation Support and Research Unit of the Inspectorate, which co-ordinated both the preparation of the survey and the publication of this report, to the members of the Inspectorate who formed the Working Group, and to MORI Ireland, who administered the survey and analysed the subsequent data on behalf of the Inspectorate.





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# Chapter 1

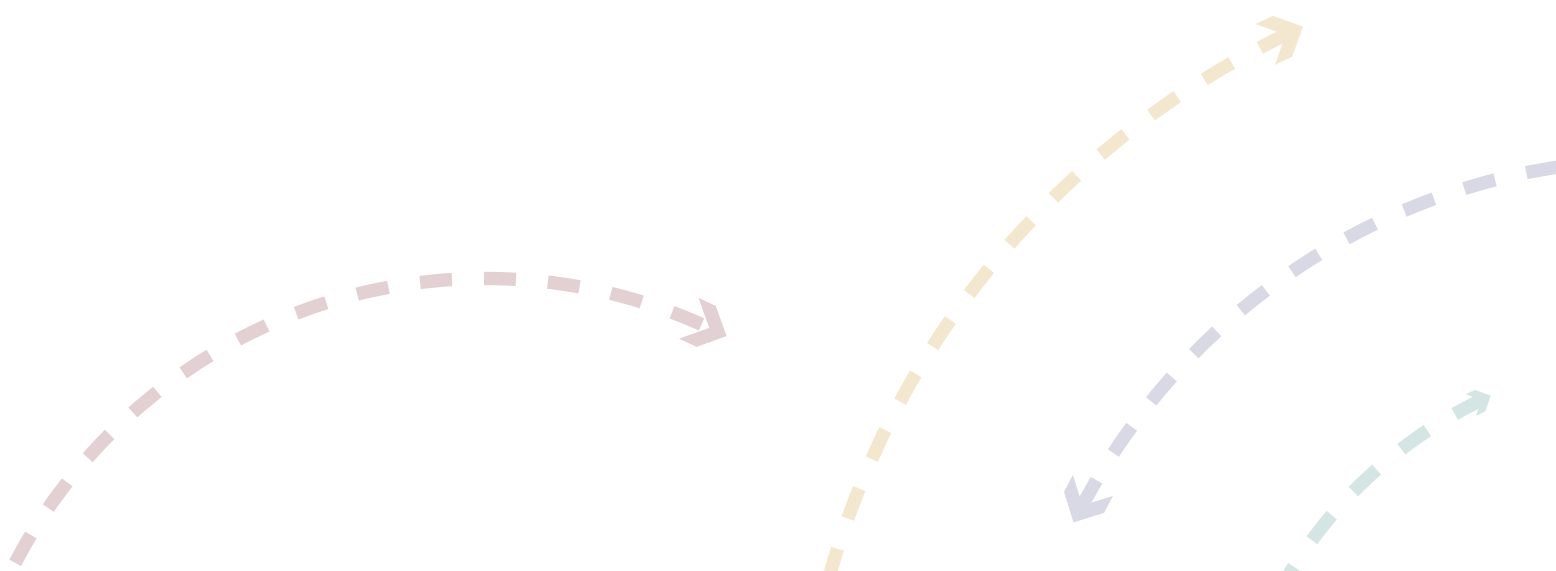
## Introduction

The Inspectorate is a division within the Department of Education and Science (DES). It has a statutory quality assurance obligation in relation to education provision, as set out in section 13 of the Education Act 1998. The act defines the functions of an inspector in his or her dealings with teachers, schools and school management interests and outlines the duty of the Inspectorate in advising the Minister.

The activities of the Inspectorate can be categorised broadly in three strands:

- operating a programme of inspection in schools and centres for education and monitoring and evaluating particular aspects of education provision,
- advising on and assessing the implementation of the Education Act 1998 and other relevant acts and departmental regulations, and
- contributing to and supporting policy development and review.

In order to address these various strands of activity in a comprehensive manner, the Inspectorate is organised into two subdivisions: the Policy Support Subdivision and the Regional Services Subdivision. The Policy Support Subdivision is responsible for contributing to the development of DES policy in a range of areas, for supporting the evaluation activities of the Inspectorate generally and for the provision of corporate services and co-ordinating international linkages within the Inspectorate. As the core function of the Inspectorate is to report on the quality of education provision, the majority of inspectors are assigned to the Regional Services Subdivision. This subdivision plans, manages and implements the Inspectorate's annual inspection programme, which includes the inspection of teachers, schools and centres for education throughout the country. Evaluations of teaching and learning in particular subjects, and evaluations of the work of schools through the process of whole-school evaluation (WSE), are conducted. A significant amount of time is devoted to evaluating the work of newly qualified primary teachers.





The goal of the Inspectorate is to promote excellence in the education system through the performance of its evaluative and advisory functions. The *Professional Code of Practice on Evaluation and Reporting* for the Inspectorate sets out the general principles in accordance with which members of the Inspectorate engage in the process of evaluating and reporting and make clear the standards to which the Inspectorate works. These principles include

- fostering mutual respect and trust, partnership, and collaboration,
- consistent application of evaluation criteria,
- concern for accuracy and reliance on first-hand evidence,
- maintaining consistency and fairness,
- ensuring confidentiality, courtesy, respect and fairness in interactions, and
- acknowledging that pupils are the ultimate beneficiaries of the evaluation process.

These principles recognise the rights of those with whom we engage in schools during evaluation activities to a fair and consistent evaluation system, both in the manner in which inspection is carried out and in the style of reporting evaluation findings. They are further expanded in the *Professional Code of Practice on Evaluation and Reporting* with regard to professional relationships, evaluation procedures, and oral and written reporting. The Inspectorate has also published its *Procedure for Review of Inspections on Schools and Teachers* under section 13 (9) of the Education Act 1998. Both these publications represent an expansion of the Inspectorate's commitments in accordance with the *DES Quality Customer Service Action Plan* (2004-2007).

Inspectors of schools have a particular responsibility under the Education Act 1998 to parents, centres of education, primary and post-primary teachers, patrons, trustees, the education partners, the support services and pupils. The Inspectorate, therefore, in providing a service, has a provider-customer relationship with these individuals and bodies.

The services provided by the Inspectorate to its external customers are diverse and complex, both in function and in organisation. The point of contact with the customer and the medium used vary and may occur in a classroom, staff room, office, meeting venue, or home. Contact may be made in an informal setting, but frequently it occurs in a formal or semi-formal setting, as in making a presentation or contributing at a meeting and often involves one-to-one interaction. The media used may be the written or spoken word and may involve telephone calls, e-mail, and fax.

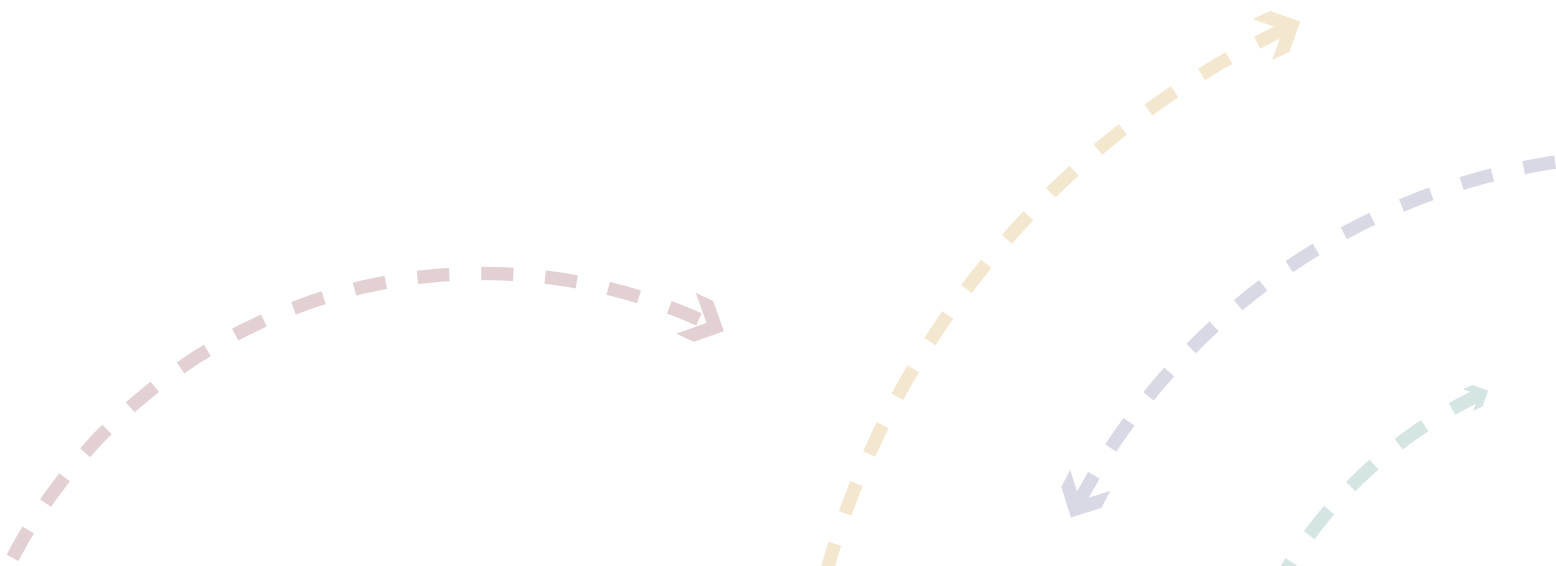
As the major work output of the Inspectorate involves evaluative work in schools and the production of evaluation reports, and as the majority of inspectors are involved in this activity, this first customer survey of the Inspectorate deals with those customers who have engaged with inspectors in evaluation activity. Therefore, four groups of customers were surveyed:

- parents;
- members of boards of management;
- school principals;
- teachers.

The rate of return of completed questionnaires from parents and from boards of management was very low (four percent and one percent, respectively). MORI Ireland decided that it would be unwise and unreliable to base any analysis on such small samples, and consequently they have been excluded from the analysis for this report.

### The Report Structure

Chapter 2 outlines the procedures and methodology employed in gathering the data for the survey. Chapters 3 and 4 present a report of the analysis of questionnaire data from teachers and school principals. Chapter 5 reflects on the findings of the survey and draws attention to priorities for action by the Inspectorate based on these findings.







# Chapter 2

## Research Design

The research design for the survey was determined by the Evaluation and Research Support Unit (ESRU) of the Inspectorate, and the survey was administered, analysed and reported on by MORI Ireland.

### THE RESPONDENTS

It was decided that representative numbers of customers from four distinct audiences would be surveyed:

- school principals;
- teachers;
- boards of management;
- parents.

In developing criteria for identifying respondents from each of the four target groups, care was taken that those surveyed would constitute a representative sample of each group. The size and location of a school and its experience of evaluation activities were therefore considered. At post-primary level, schools from each of the three sectors – voluntary secondary, vocational education committee, and community and comprehensive – were represented in the survey.

#### School Principals

A sample group of 150 school principals was identified. In accordance with the number of inspections carried out at both levels, 75 schools were identified in each of the levels, primary and post-primary.

#### Teachers

A sample group of 539 teachers was also identified. These were selected from the same 150 schools to which the school principal questionnaires were issued. This group consisted of 204 experienced teachers and 177 newly qualified teachers at primary level and 158 teachers at post-primary level.

#### Boards of Management

A sample group of 20 boards of management was identified. Boards from 10 primary schools and 10 post-primary schools were included in the survey. All members of each board of management identified were to be included.

## Parents

A sample group of 60 parents was chosen, to be drawn from the 10 primary schools and 10 post-primary schools whose boards of management were included in the survey.

The extremely low response rate from the boards of management and the parents surveyed (one percent and four percent, respectively) resulted in the exclusion of data received from those respondents from the findings of the report.

## THE SURVEY

Short questionnaires (between 14 and 17 items) were distributed to each of the target groups to measure respondents' views on three scales:

- professional relationships in the context of school evaluation;
- evaluation procedures;
- reporting.

The items on each scale were taken from the *Professional Code of Practice on Evaluation and Reporting* for the Inspectorate.

The Evaluation Support and Research Unit prepared and supplied MORI Ireland with relevant contact details for all those to be surveyed. In respect of the boards of management and parents, the chairpersons of the board of management in each of the twenty schools identified for participation in the survey were asked to distribute the questionnaires to all members of each board of management and to three parents through their parents' association.

Completed questionnaires were returned directly to MORI Ireland for data entry and processing. A report of the analysis of questionnaire data is presented in chapters 3 and 4. The questionnaires used in the research are given in the appendixes.





# Chapter 3

## Survey of Teachers

This chapter examines teachers' attitudes towards the Inspectorate in more detail. In addition, a *key driver analysis* – an analysis of those factors with the greatest influence on teachers' satisfaction with the Inspectorate – is presented.

The questionnaire evaluated three aspects of the Inspectorate's inspection activity.

- professional relationships in the context of school evaluation,
- evaluation procedures,
- reporting.

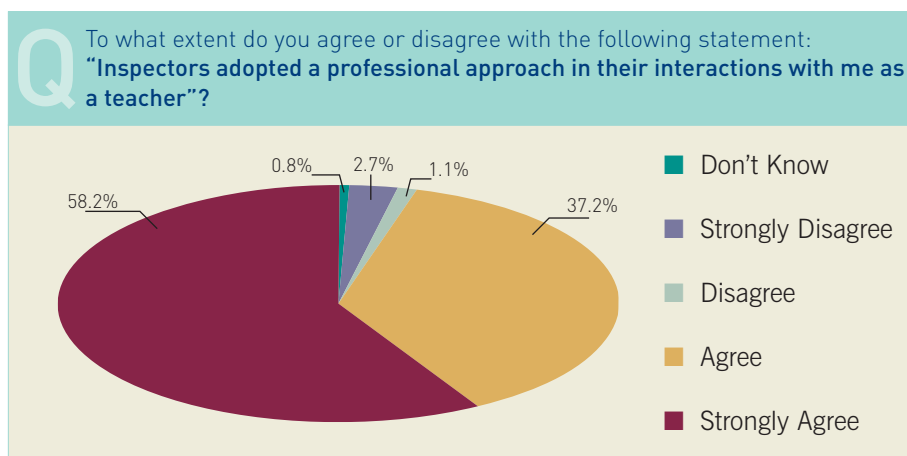
Under each heading, the teachers were presented with a number of statements and were asked to record their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement. They were also invited to make additional comments. A total of 261 teachers responded to the survey; this is a response rate of 48.4 per cent, which is greater than the level typically associated with self-completion surveys.

In general, there is a high level of satisfaction with the Inspectorate among teachers. Slightly fewer than half (48.7 per cent) stated that they were “very satisfied” with the Inspectorate, and a further 40.7 per cent were “satisfied.” Fewer than one in ten (9.1 per cent) were either “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” with the Inspectorate.

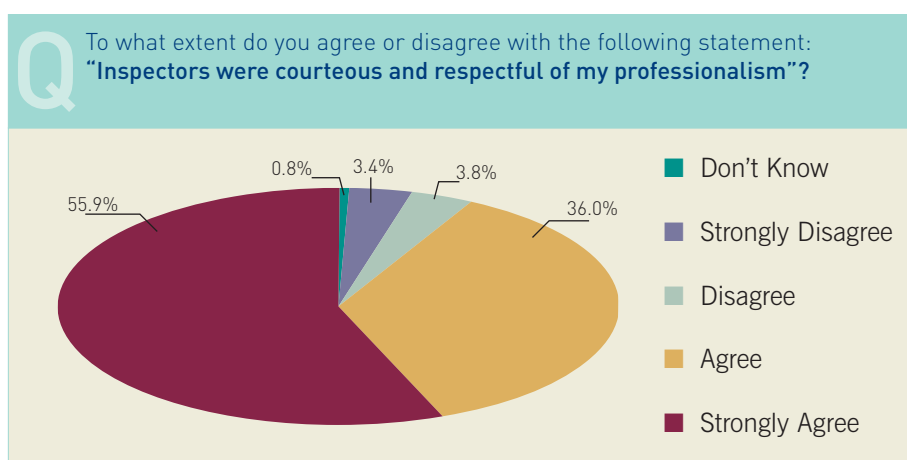
### 3.1 Professional relationships in the context of school evaluation

Inspectors rely on the support and good will of principals and teachers to ensure that their work is a co-operative enterprise. To this end, the inspector's ability to build a relationship with teachers in the carrying out of school evaluation is of critical importance. The first item in this section, which dealt with inspectors' professionalism in their interactions with teachers, generated an extremely positive response from teachers, with 95.4 per cent in agreement with the statement that “inspectors adopted a professional approach in their interactions with me as a teacher.”

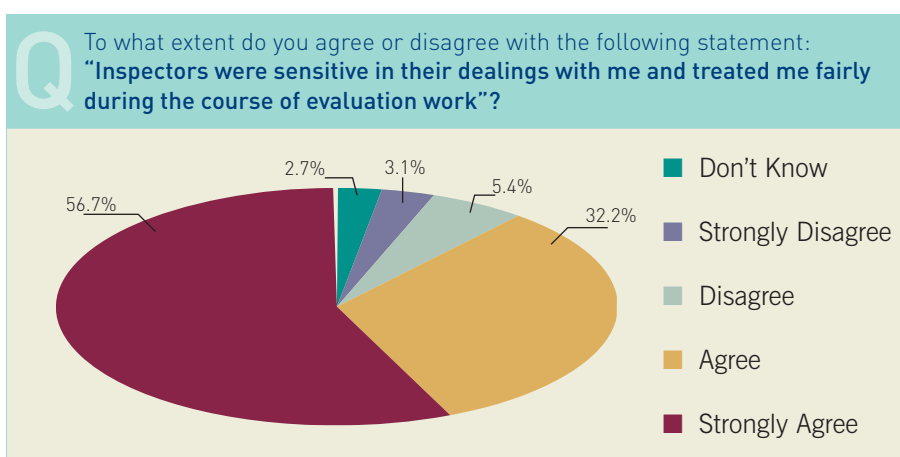




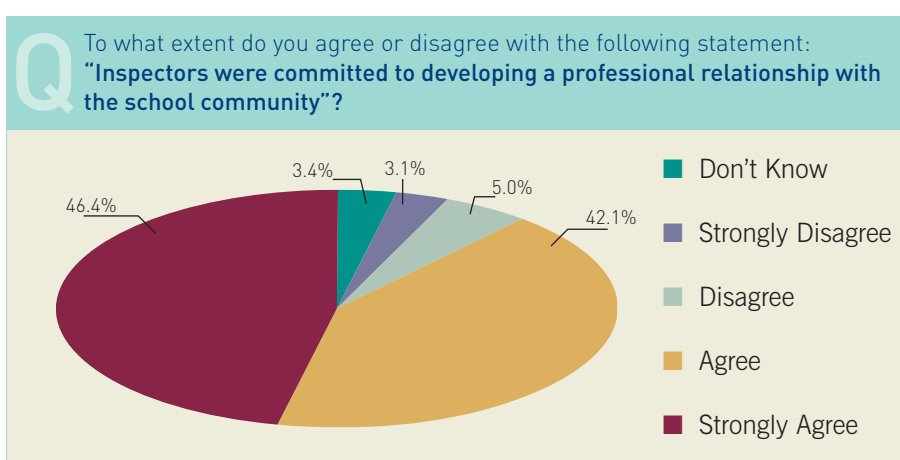
Inspectors were also perceived as courteous and respectful. The second statement in this section, “Inspectors were courteous and respectful of my professionalism,” received a very positive response. More than half the teachers (55.9 per cent) strongly agreed with the statement, and another 36 per cent agreed; this compares with only 7.2 per cent who strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement.



It is a particular challenge for inspectors to show sensitivity and fairness while remaining objective and impartial in the course of their work. It appears that inspectors are largely very successful in meeting this challenge, as only 8.5 per cent of the teachers disagreed with the statement that “inspectors were sensitive in their dealings with me and treated me fairly during the course of evaluation work.”



In addition to building relationships with teachers, inspectors also need to relate to the wider school community during evaluation work. The final item in this section of the questionnaire was concerned with the inspectors' ability to build relationships with the wider school community. It appears that they are successful in this, as 46.4 per cent of the teachers strongly agreed and 42.1 per cent agreed with the statement that “inspectors were committed to developing a positive professional relationship with the school community.”



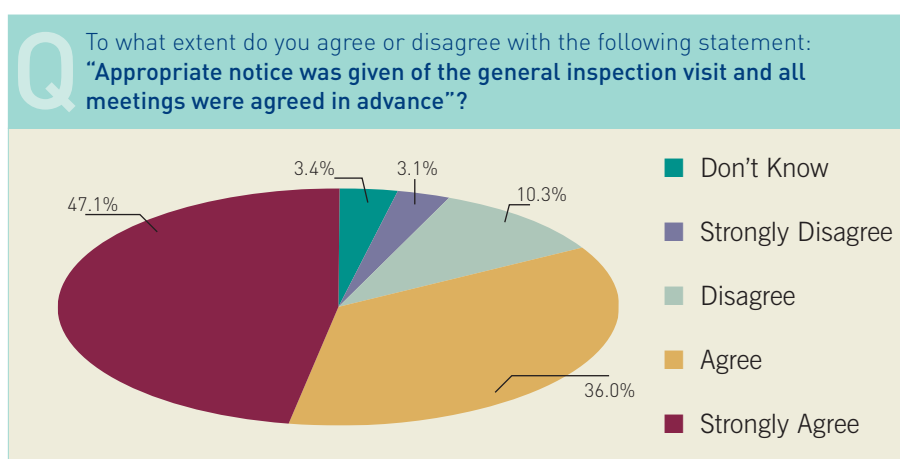
#### Additional comments regarding professional relationships in the context of school evaluation

Twenty-six comments were recorded in the open comment box in this section of the questionnaire. Of these, twenty-two were positive and four were negative. The comments were concerned primarily with the conduct of the inspector in carrying out the school evaluation.

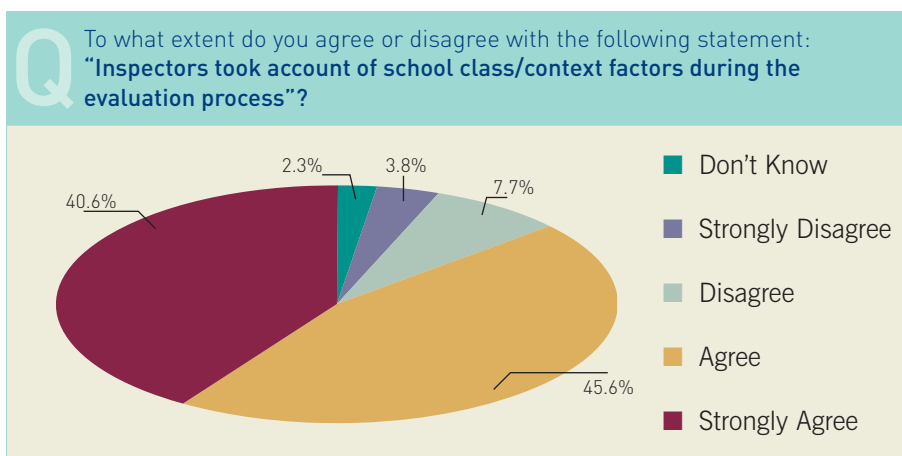
### 3.2 Teachers' perception of inspectors' evaluation procedures

This section of the questionnaire was designed to capture teachers' perceptions of the procedures adopted in conducting an evaluation. In addition to organisational and administrative tasks, such as giving appropriate notice for the inspection, the teachers were given an opportunity to express their views about the extent to which inspectors took account of school context factors or afforded teachers an opportunity to contribute to the evaluation process.

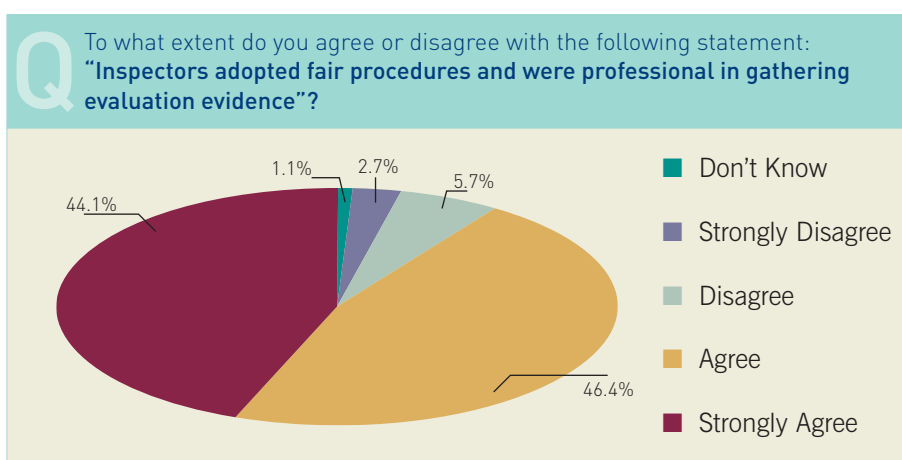
The first item in this section of the questionnaire was concerned with the administrative elements of the evaluation process, such as giving adequate notice of meetings and general inspection visits. It would appear that while 83.1 per cent of teachers were satisfied or very satisfied with the notice given of general inspection visits and meetings, more than one in eight (13.4 per cent) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that "appropriate notice was given of the general inspection visit and all meetings were agreed in advance."



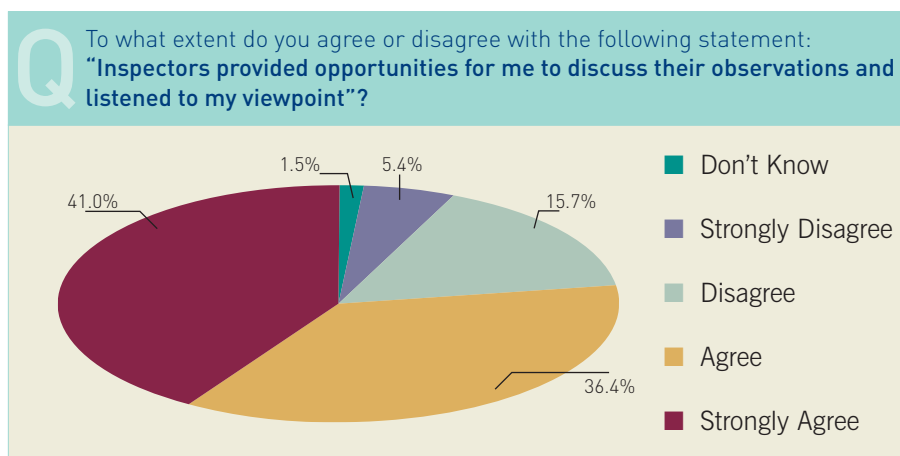
It appears that teachers consider inspectors to be aware of the particular circumstances in which each school operates, and that they take this into account in their findings. 40.6 per cent of the teachers strongly agreed and 45.6 per cent agreed with the statement that "inspectors took account of school class/context factors during the evaluation process."



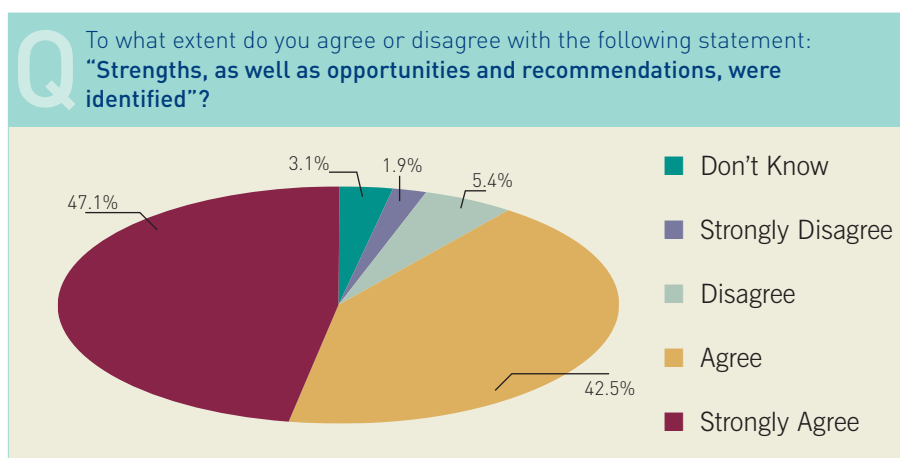
Inspectors were rated very highly for their expertise in gathering evidence for evaluations. There was a widespread perception of inspectors as fair and professional in this regard, and this aspect received the highest level of agreement in this section of the questionnaire. Over 90 per cent of the teachers either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that “inspectors adopted fair procedures and were professional in gathering evaluation evidence.”



In contrast, more than a fifth of the teachers surveyed (21.1 per cent) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that “inspectors provided opportunities for me to discuss their observations and listened to my viewpoint.” While 77.4 per cent agreed that opportunities had been provided to them, this is the highest level of disagreement with any item in the teachers’ questionnaire.

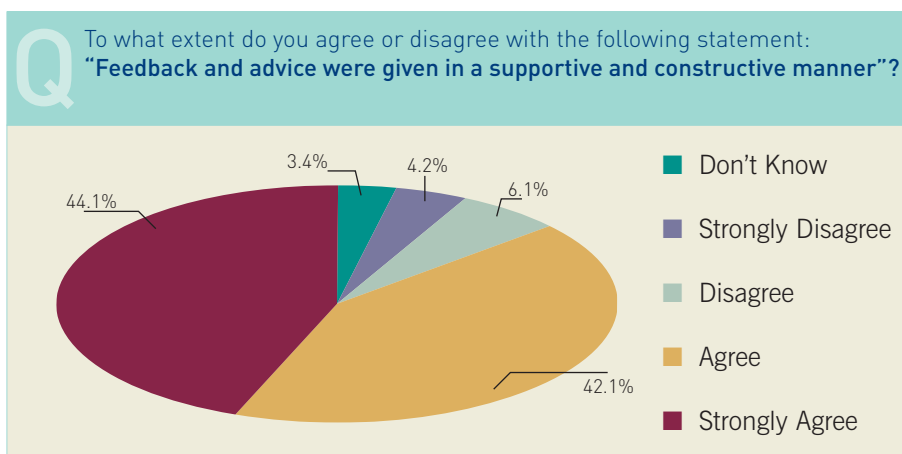


Inspectors' ability to clearly identify strengths as well as opportunities for development received widespread endorsement from teachers. When asked to state their level of agreement with the statement that “strengths, as well as opportunities and recommendations, were identified,” 89.6 per cent of respondents said they either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement.



Inspectors' skills in giving feedback received a slightly lower approval rating. The statement that “feedback and advice were given in a supportive and constructive manner” received a lower level of agreement (86.2 per cent) and a higher level of disagreement compared with the previous statement: 10.3 per cent, compared with 7.3 per cent.





#### Additional comments regarding evaluation procedures

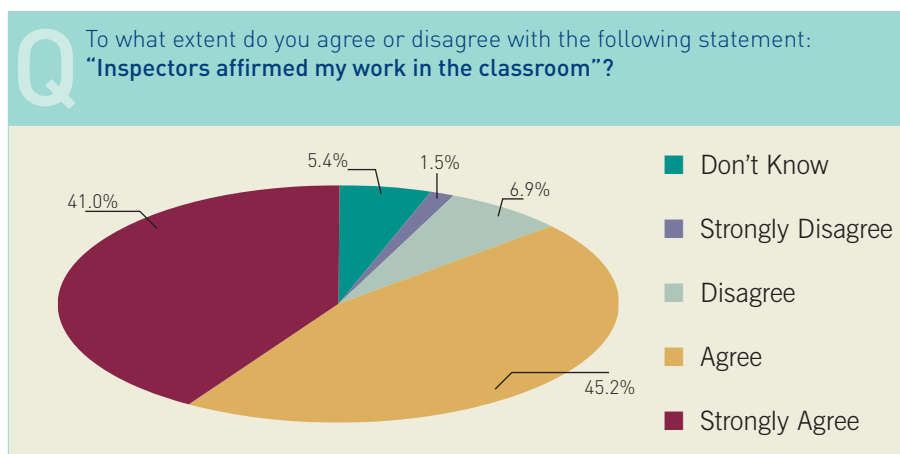
Thirty-five comments were recorded in the open comment box in this section of the questionnaire. Twenty-six comments concerned inspectors listening to teachers and to other aspects of teacher-inspector communication; the remaining nine comments related to the inspectors' appreciation of the school context.

### 3.3 Reporting

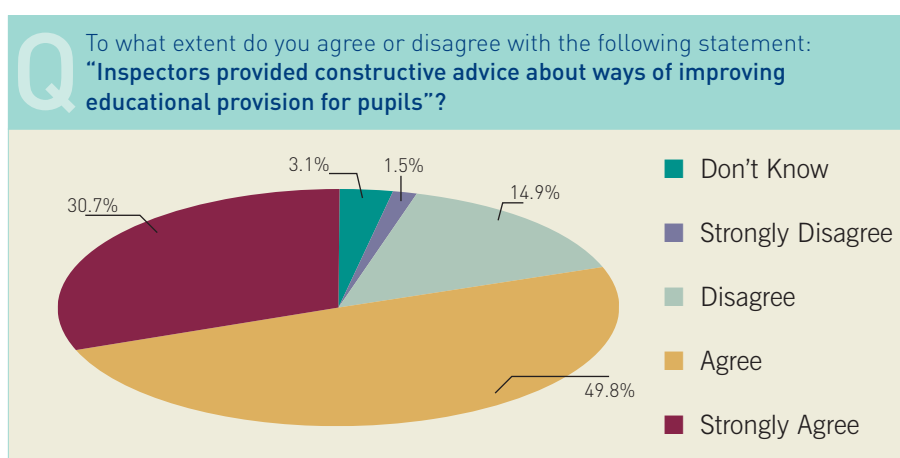
Reporting is a very important aspect of the inspector's role. The written report presents the findings of the evaluation visit, and it is essential that the report is seen as accurate and objective. Seven items in the teachers' questionnaire related to reporting by inspectors and were concerned with their ability to communicate effectively with teachers, consistency between oral and written reporting, and the timeliness with which written reports are received.

Inspectors are largely perceived as appreciative of teachers and affirmative in respect of the teachers' work. The teachers were asked to report their level of agreement with the statement that "inspectors affirmed my work in the classroom." Forty-one per cent of respondents strongly agreed with this statement, and 45.2 per cent agreed.

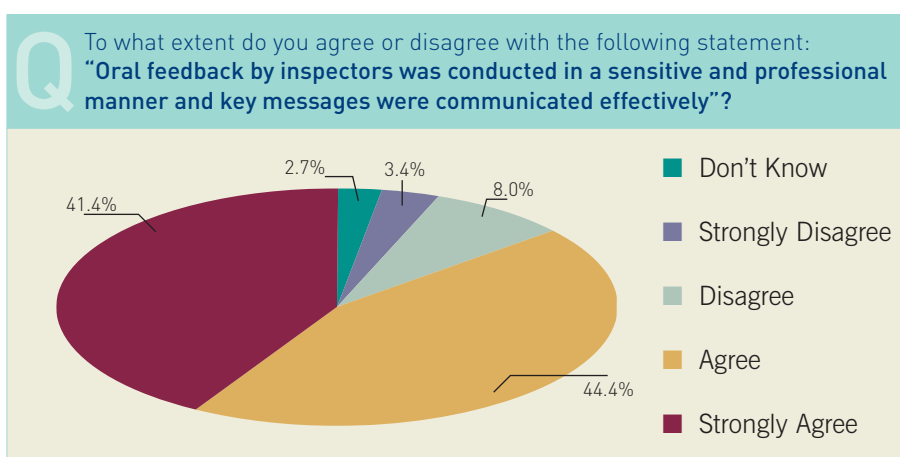




The second item concerned the advice given by inspectors about the means of improving education provision for pupils in the context of the report. While 80.5 per cent of teachers strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that “inspectors provided constructive advice about ways of improving educational provision for pupils,” 16.4 per cent disagreed.

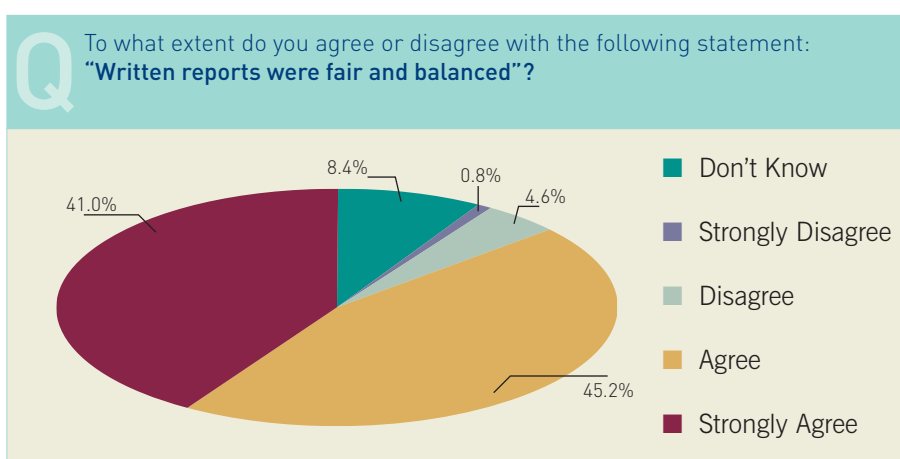


During the evaluation process, inspectors conduct several meetings with teachers. In this way they provide oral feedback to teachers and inform them of the essential points in respect of the final evaluation report. The great majority of respondents (85.8 per cent) were satisfied with how such feedback was given, while 11.4 per cent either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement that “oral feedback by inspectors was conducted in a sensitive and professional manner and key messages were communicated effectively.”

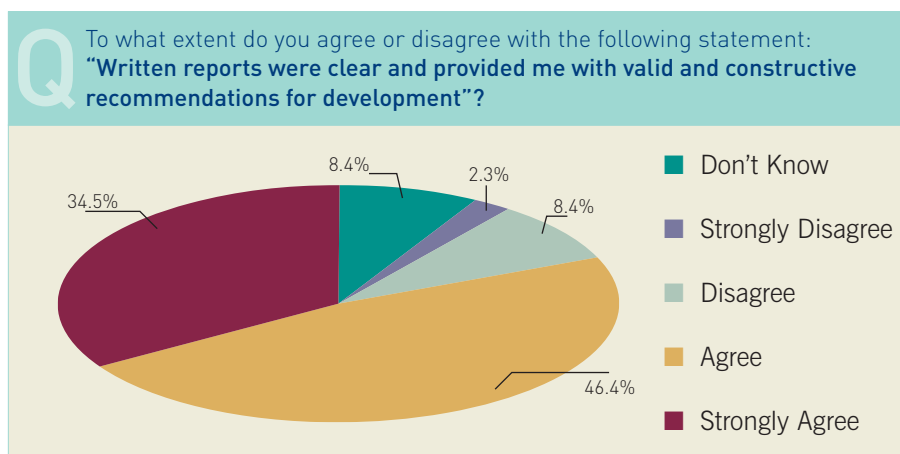


In contrast to oral feedback following evaluation, the written report by an inspector is the final and more permanent account of the evaluation. Accordingly, it is often afforded greater authority. The following three items of the analysis concentrate on the content of the written reports.

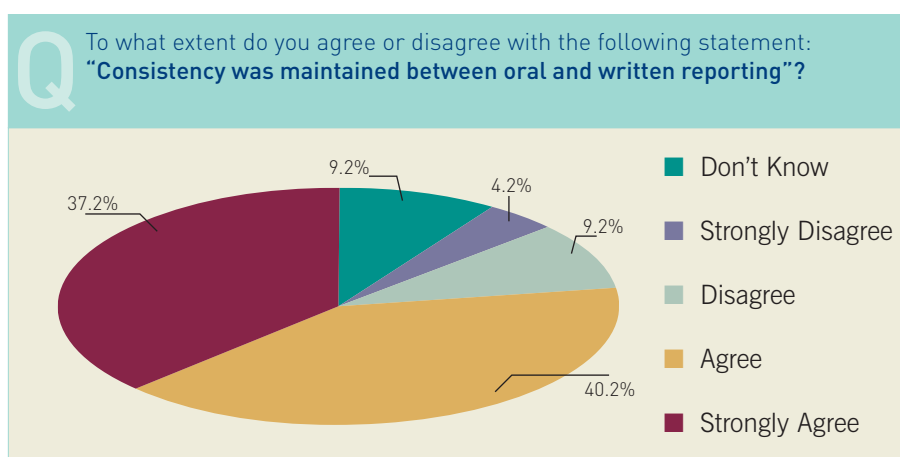
In response to the statement that “written reports were fair and balanced” the great majority of the teachers (86.2 per cent) indicated their satisfaction with inspectors’ practice in this regard. Only 5.4 per cent strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement.



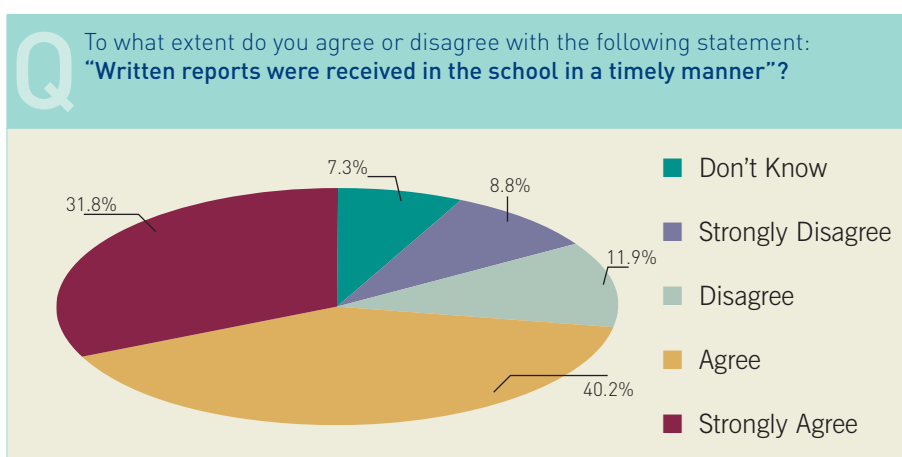
The clarity of written reports received a lower endorsement than their fairness and balance, with slightly over a third (34.5 per cent) strongly agreeing with the statement that “written reports were clear and provided to me with valid and constructive recommendations for development,” while 46.4 per cent agreed. Slightly more than one in ten of the teachers (10.7 per cent) disagreed with the statement.



When asked to consider whether “consistency was maintained between oral and written reporting,” almost one in seven of the teachers surveyed (13.4 per cent) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.



The final item of the teachers’ questionnaire was concerned with the timely receipt of the final report. The importance attached to the final report means that delay in furnishing it after an evaluation is likely to be seen as a significant issue. It is also a measurable indicator of the efficiency of the evaluation process. It is of some concern, therefore, that more than one in five of the teachers (20.7 per cent) strongly disagreed or disagreed that “written reports were received in the school in a timely manner.”



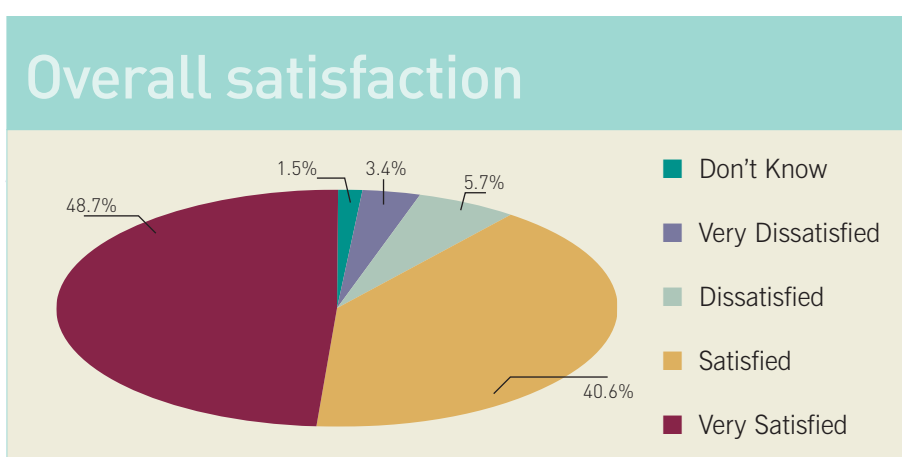
#### Additional comments regarding reporting

As evidence of the seriousness with which the reporting aspect of the evaluation process is taken, a total of forty-five comments relating to reporting were submitted in the open comment box. For the most part these were negative. Many comments in respect of reporting were negative compared with only a few positive comments. The timeliness of reporting was also a factor, with twenty negative comments about reports that were received late. There were nine negative comments relating to inconsistency between oral and written reports.

### 3.4 Overall satisfaction with the Inspectorate

This section provides an analysis of general satisfaction with the Inspectorate, and a *key driver analysis* is presented of the factors that most influence general satisfaction.

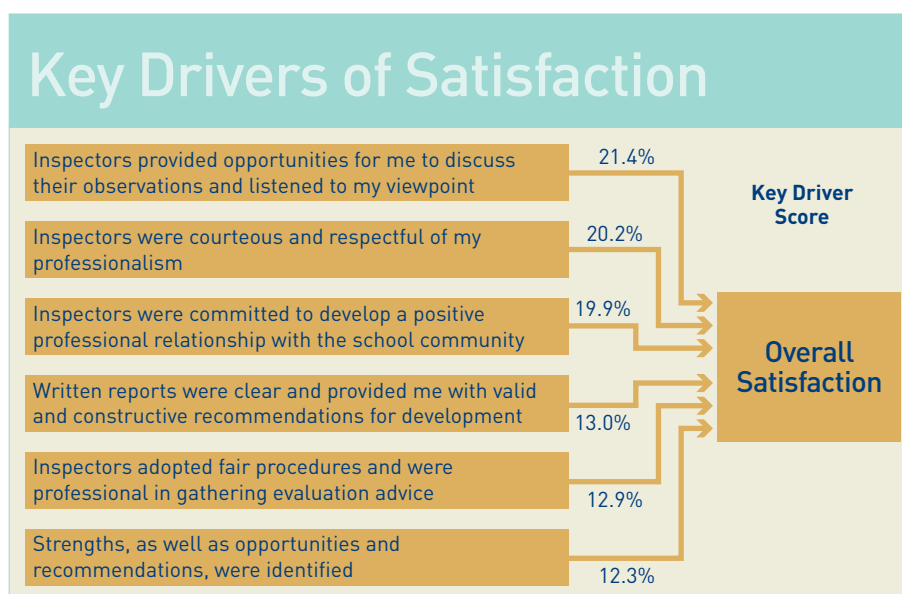
The final questionnaire item asked respondents to state their level of satisfaction with the Inspectorate. Almost half (48.7 per cent) stated that they were “very satisfied” with the Inspectorate, and a further 40.6 per cent were “satisfied.”



Slightly more than 10 per cent of the teachers surveyed stated that they were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the Inspectorate. However, differences were found in the views of teachers in different age groups. For example, younger teachers were more likely than older teachers to report themselves as “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” with the Inspectorate. While no teacher in the 55+ age group was “dissatisfied” with the Inspectorate, almost 15 per cent of those in the under-40 age group reported themselves to be either “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” with the Inspectorate; this compares with only 4.6 per cent of those in the 41-55 age group. However, the relatively small total number of teachers who expressed dissatisfaction with the Inspectorate needs to be borne in mind.

### Key driver analysis - overall satisfaction with the Inspectorate

In addition to comparing general satisfaction by age and sex of the teachers, regression analysis was used to investigate the relative importance of the questionnaire items on general satisfaction. This works by identifying those questionnaire items that are most highly correlated with general satisfaction: these are the factors considered the “key drivers” of satisfaction with the service. The result is a table of relative influence, which shows the relative importance of each key driver as a percentage, as shown in the following diagram. This model accounts for 58 per cent of the variation within the variable “overall satisfaction.”





The diagram shows that there are six questionnaire items significantly correlated with overall satisfaction. This means that an increase or decrease in the level of agreement with the six items is likely to lead to a corresponding change in overall satisfaction. The six items are also clustered in two sets of three items, with the three more influential items relating to professional relationships in the context of school evaluation and the second three relating to evaluation procedures and reporting.

These results demonstrate the importance and influence of interpersonal skills relative to the obvious technical prerequisites of professional evaluation skills. It should be noted that, as well as encouraging support among the school community, interpersonal attributes such as showing enthusiasm and respect have a significant bearing on general satisfaction ratings with the Inspectorate.



## Chapter 4

### Survey of School Principals

This chapter examines school principals' perceptions of the Inspectorate in more detail. In addition, a *key driver analysis* – an analysis of those factors with the greatest influence on principals' satisfaction with the Inspectorate – is presented.

The questionnaire for principals was intended to examine the same three aspects of the inspection activity as the teachers' questionnaire:

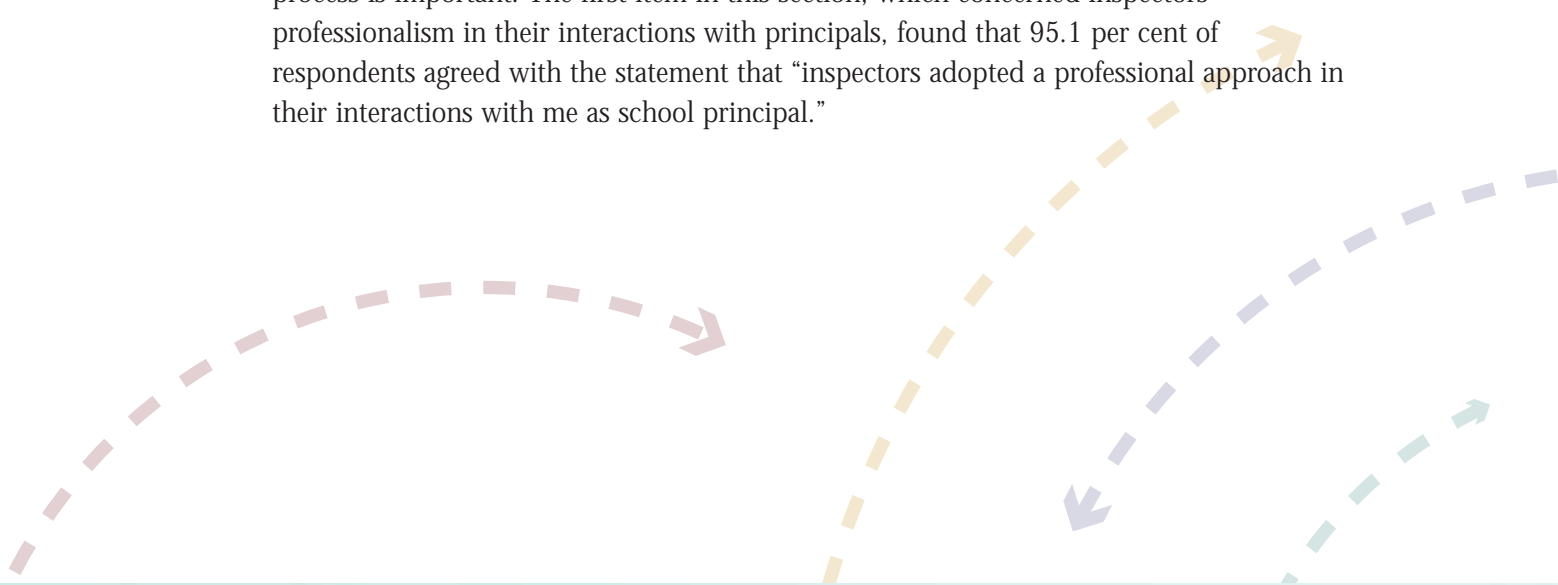
- professional relationships in the context of school evaluation,
- evaluation procedures,
- reporting.

Under each heading the principals were presented with a number of statements and were asked to record their level of agreement or disagreement with each. They were also invited to provide additional comments. A total of 102 principals responded to the survey, a response rate of 68 per cent.

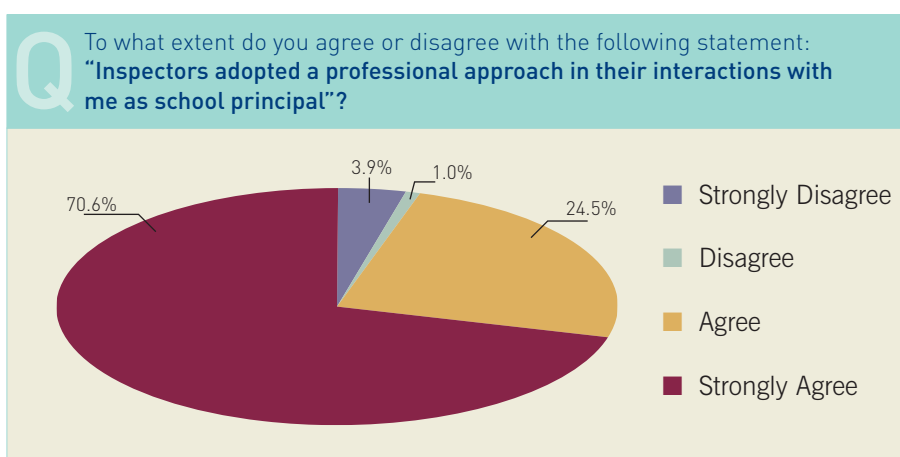
In general, as with teachers, there was a high level of satisfaction among principals with the Inspectorate. Almost half the principals (48 per cent) were “very satisfied” with the Inspectorate, and a further 44.1 per cent were “satisfied.” Only 5.8 per cent were either “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied.”

#### 4.1 Professional relationships in the context of school evaluation

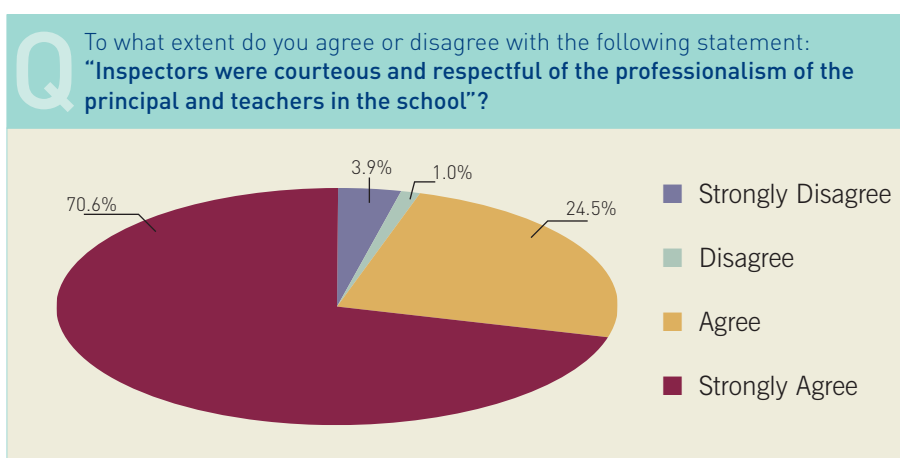
This section of the questionnaire contained four separate items concerned with inspectors' professional relationships with school principals in the context of school evaluation. As with teachers, an inspector's ability to build relationships with principals during the evaluation process is important. The first item in this section, which concerned inspectors' professionalism in their interactions with principals, found that 95.1 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement that “inspectors adopted a professional approach in their interactions with me as school principal.”





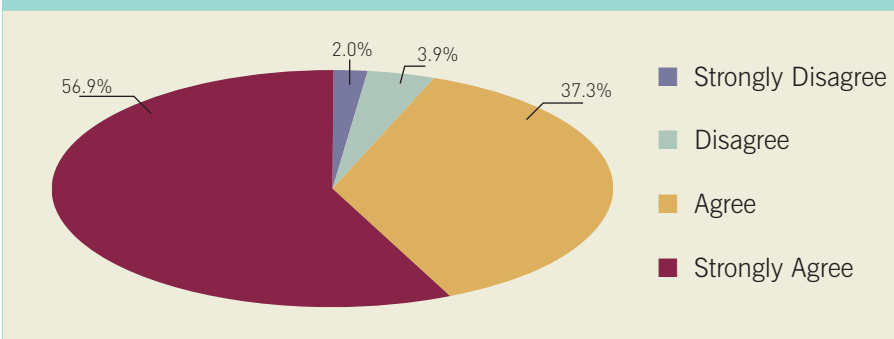


The second statement in this section, “Inspectors were courteous and respectful of the professionalism of the principal and teachers in the school,” also received a positive response. A total of 70.6 per cent of the principals strongly agreed with the statement, and another 24.5 per cent agreed; this compares with only 4.9 per cent who strongly disagreed or disagreed.



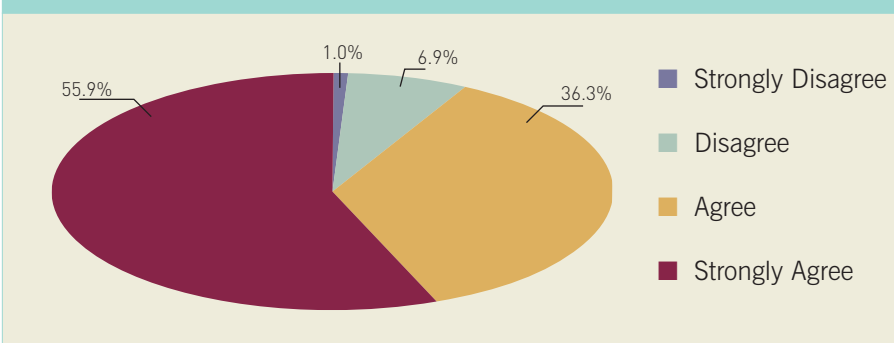
The third item in the questionnaire concerned the inspectors’ interpersonal skills in the course of their work. Almost all the principals (94.2 per cent) either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that “inspectors were sensitive in their dealing with individual members of staff in the school and treated people fairly during the course of evaluation work.”

**Q** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:  
**“Inspectors were sensitive in their dealings with individual members of staff in the school and treated people fairly during the course of their evaluation work”?**



The final item in this section of the questionnaire concerned inspectors' ability to build relationships with the wider school community during their work. In total, 92.2 per cent of the principals agreed, and 55.9 per cent were in strong agreement, with the statement that “inspectors were committed to developing a positive professional relationship with the school community.”

**Q** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:  
**“Inspectors were committed to developing a professional relationship with the school community”?**



#### Additional comments regarding professional relationships in the context of school evaluation

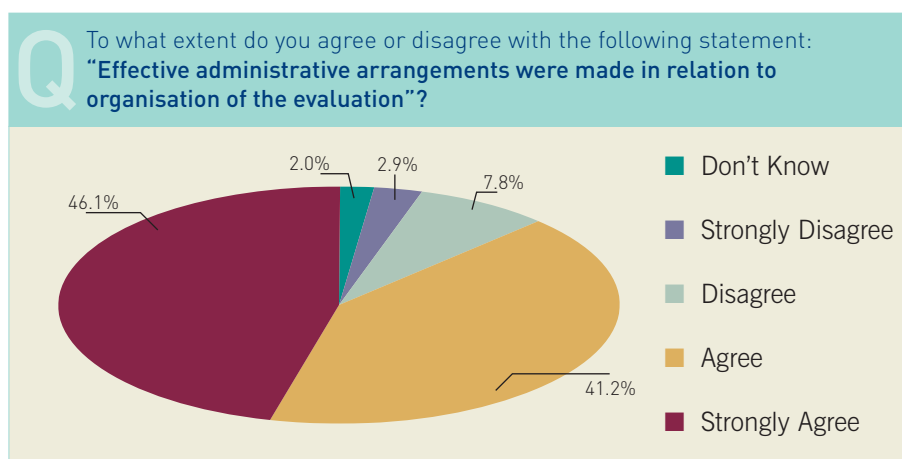
School principals were invited to provide additional comment in the questionnaire regarding professional relationships in the context of school evaluation. Eleven comments were recorded; eight were positive and three were negative. The comments concerned the conduct of the inspector in the course of the school evaluation.



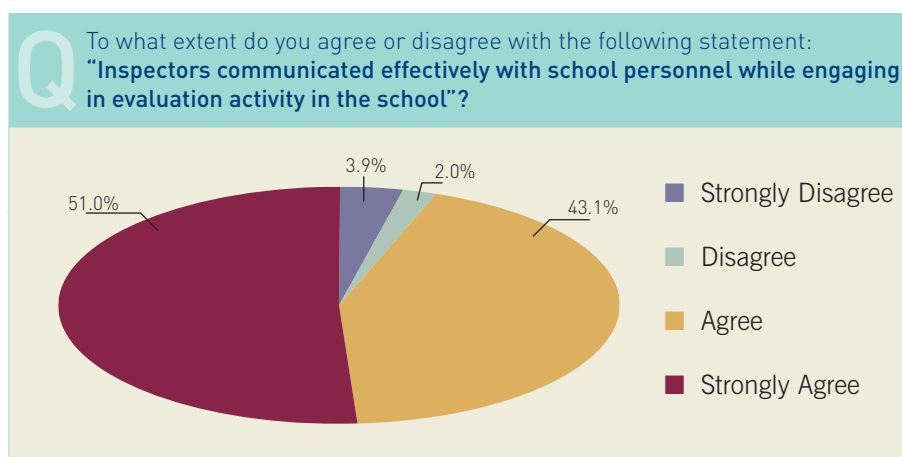
## 4.2 Teachers' perception of inspectors' evaluation procedures

### Evaluation procedures

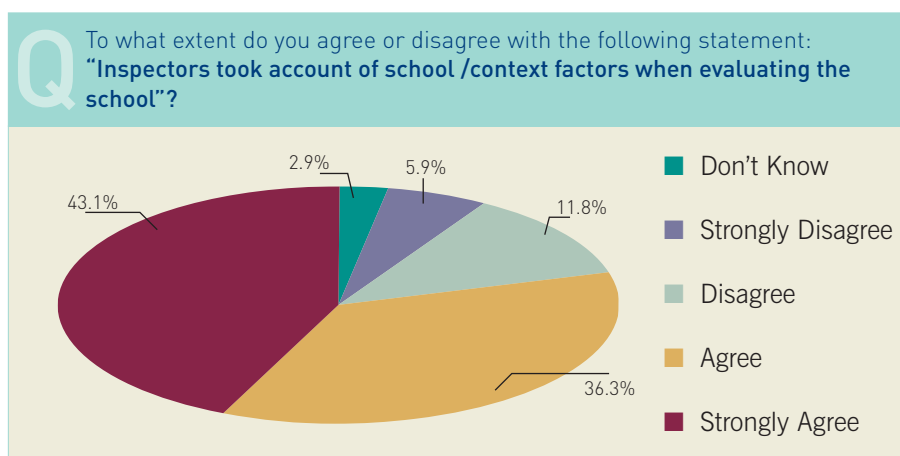
The questionnaire sought to ascertain principals' opinions of the administrative arrangements for evaluation procedures. This section of the questionnaire looked at their opinions of the evaluation process. The first item concerned the administrative elements of the process. Most of the principals (87.3 per cent) were satisfied with the administrative arrangements for evaluation; however, one in ten (10.7 per cent) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that "effective administrative arrangements were made in relation to organisation of the evaluation."



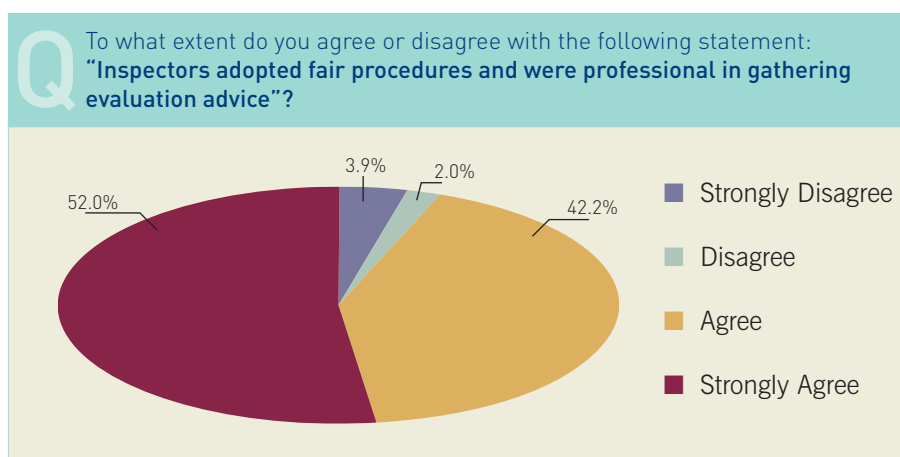
Inspectors were rated very highly as communicators. Almost all the principals (94.1 per cent) perceived that inspectors communicated effectively with school personnel during the school evaluation process. Of these, 51 per cent were in strong agreement. Only 5.9 per cent disagreed with the statement that "inspectors communicated effectively with school personnel while engaging in evaluation activity in the school."



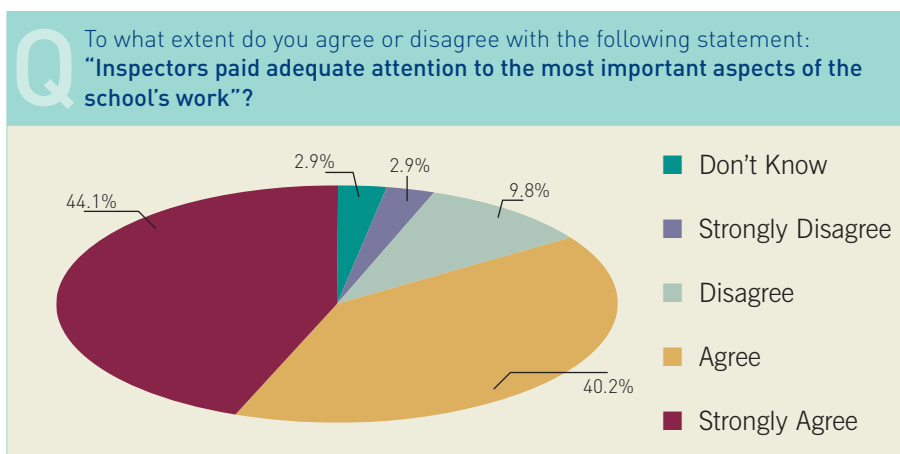
While the majority of principals (79.4 per cent) agreed that inspectors took account of school context factors during the evaluation process, 17.7 per cent either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement that “inspectors took account of school context factors when evaluating the school.” This was the highest level of disagreement recorded on any of the principals’ questionnaire items and represents an area where further research should be considered in order to explore the reasons for this.



Inspectors were perceived as professional in their approach and were seen by the great majority of principals to employ fair evaluation procedures. Most (94.2 per cent) either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that “inspectors adopted fair procedures and were professional in gathering evaluation advice,” while only 5.9 per cent were in disagreement.



The final item in this section of the questionnaire concerned the inspectors’ recognition of particular aspects of the school’s work. While the great majority of respondents (84.3 per cent) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that “inspectors paid adequate attention to the most important aspects of the school’s work,” one in eight respondents (12.7 per cent) disagreed.

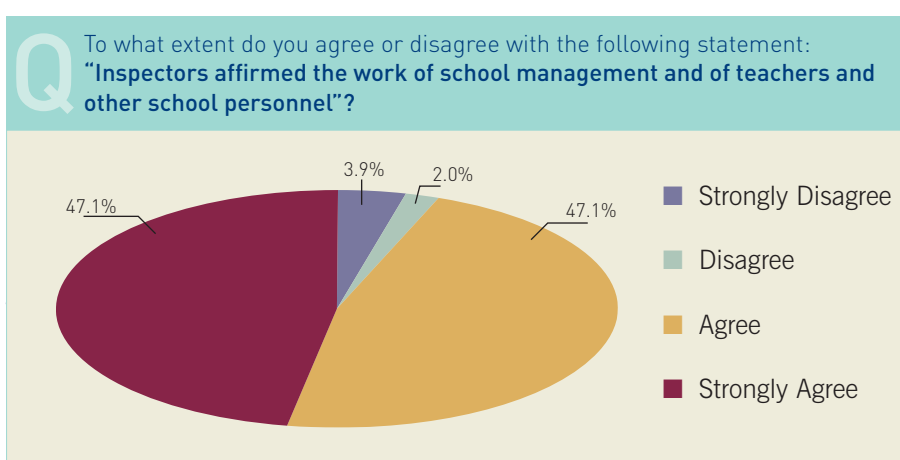


#### Additional comments regarding evaluation procedures

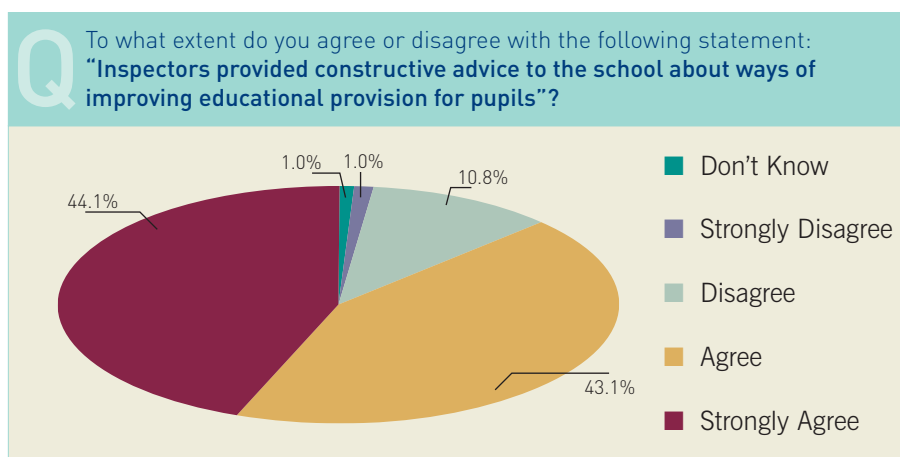
Of the 24 additional comments submitted by respondents in this section of the questionnaire, 12 were concerned with aspects relating to inspectors’ communication skills, and the remaining 12 comments related to inspectors’ appreciation of the school context.

### 4.3 Reporting

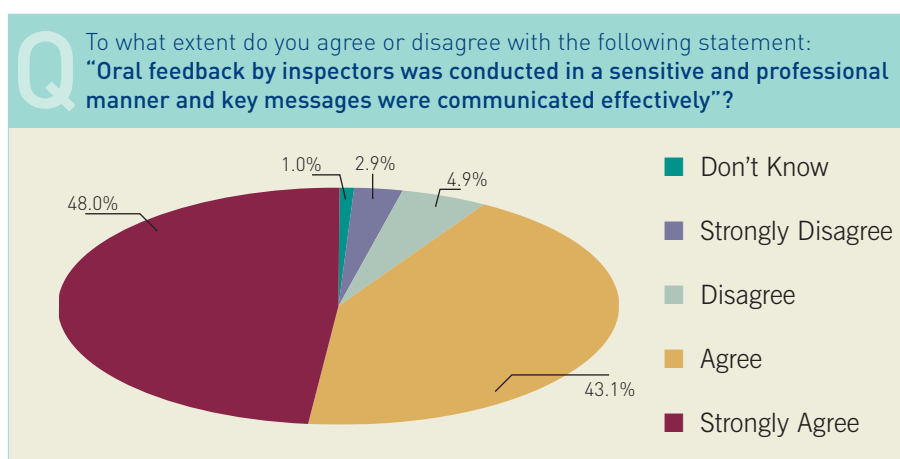
Respondents were provided with statements about inspectors’ communication ability, balance and fairness in reporting and about whether they were provided with an adequate opportunity to discuss the findings of the evaluation reports. They were asked to state their level of agreement with the statement that “inspectors affirmed the work of school management and of teachers and other school personnel.” Most of the principals (94.2 per cent) agreed with the statement, with 47.1 per cent in strong agreement.



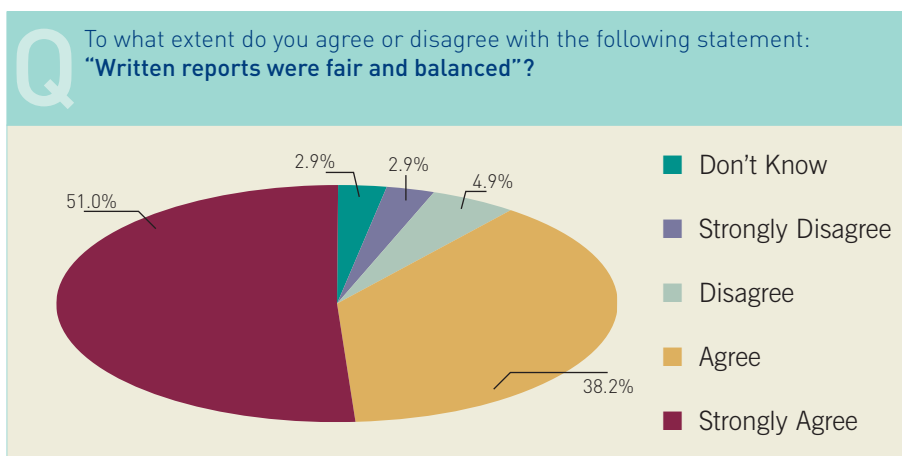
The principals reported on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement that “inspectors provided constructive advice to the school about ways of improving educational provision for pupils.” While the great majority (87.2 per cent) strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, almost one in eight (11.8 per cent) disagreed.



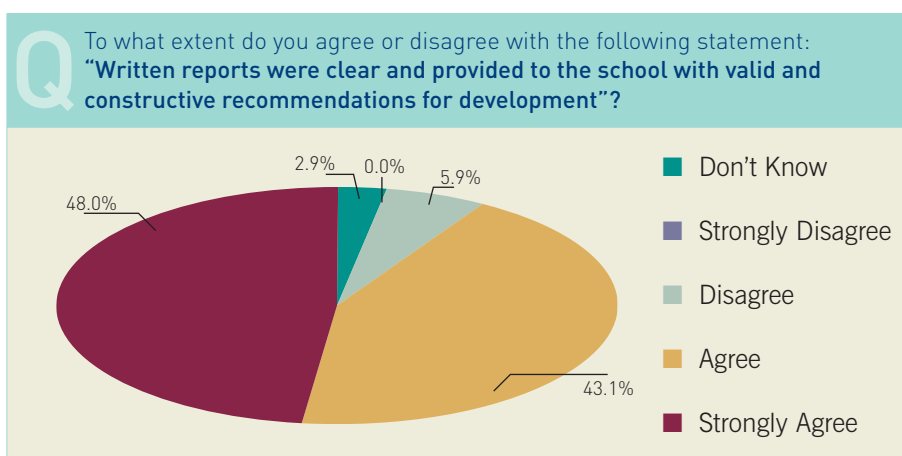
The principals rated the Inspectorate highly in oral communication ability. A total of 91.1 per cent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that “oral feedback by inspectors was conducted in a sensitive and professional manner and key messages were communicated clearly.” This was a higher rating than that reported by teachers, with only 7.8 per cent of the principals in disagreement, compared with 11.4 per cent of teachers.



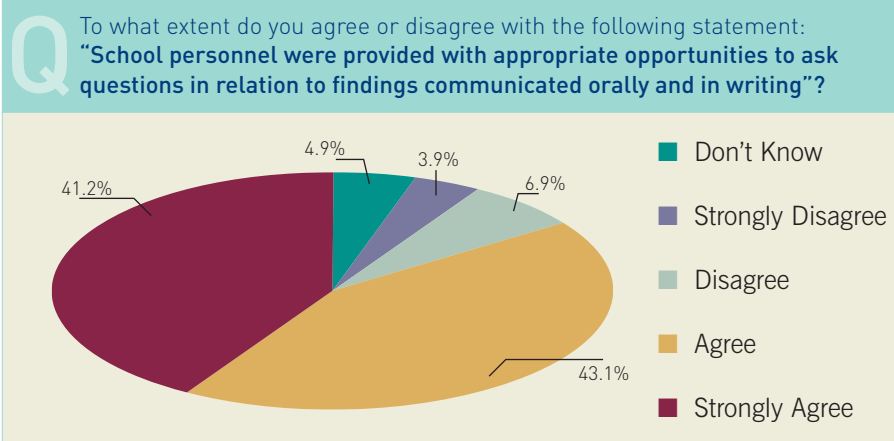
The final three items of the questionnaire related to the inspectors’ written reports received by principals following completion of the evaluation process. The majority of the principals reported that the inspectors’ reports were fair and balanced. 89.2 per cent of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that “written reports were fair and balanced.” Only 7.8 per cent disagreed with the statement.



The clarity of written reports was positively endorsed by the principals. Of the respondents, 91.1 per cent agreed with the statement that “written reports were clearly written and provided the school with valid and constructive recommendations for development,” and of these almost half (48 per cent) were in strong agreement.



The final item of the questionnaire concerned the opportunities provided to school personnel to ask questions in relation to evaluation findings. Again the great majority of respondents (84.3 per cent) either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that “school personnel were provided with appropriate opportunities to ask questions in relation to findings communicated orally and in writing.” However, slightly over a tenth of the respondents (10.8 per cent) disagreed with the statement.

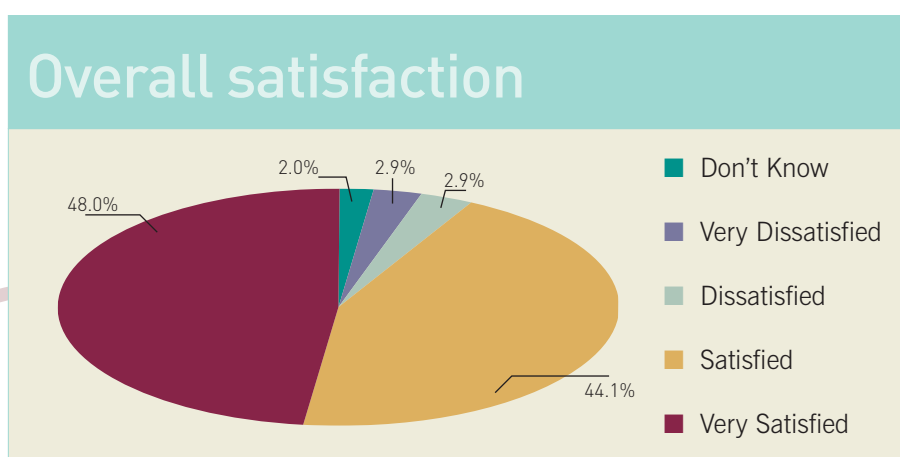


#### Additional comments regarding reporting

Twenty-three additional comments were recorded in the open comment box in this section of the questionnaire. Fourteen of these related to the quality of reporting. Three principals referred to the format of the report and stated their preference for an English-language copy of the report.

#### 4.4 General satisfaction with the Inspectorate

School principals were asked to state their level of satisfaction with the Inspectorate. Altogether, 92.1 per cent of the respondents stated that they were satisfied with the Inspectorate: 48 per cent stated that they were “very satisfied,” and a further 44.1 per cent stated that they were “satisfied.” This is slightly more positive than the results from the survey of teachers, which found that 48.7 per cent strongly agreed with the same statement, while 40.6 per cent agreed.





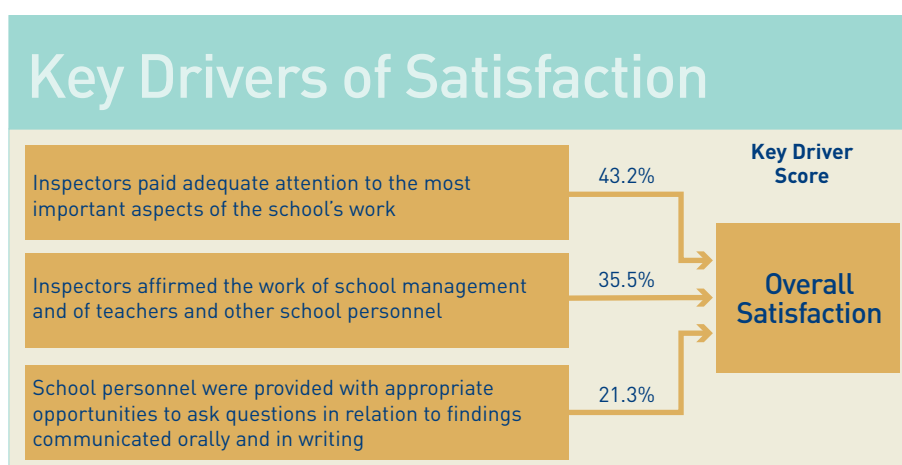


### Key driver analysis: overall satisfaction with the Inspectorate

Regression analysis was used to investigate the relative importance of the questionnaire items on overall satisfaction. Three questionnaire items were significantly correlated with overall satisfaction for school principals, as opposed to the six items identified with regard to teachers. This is likely to be as much a function of the relatively small sample as the magnitude of the drivers. The three items identified as drivers for overall satisfaction with respect to principals are concerned with evaluation procedures and reporting.

The principals were more concerned with professional aspects of the evaluation process than were the teachers. As the written report constitutes the final evidence of the evaluation, and as principals might be expected to assume greater responsibility than teachers for any such report, the affirmation of their work is clearly critical to their experience of evaluation.

The co-operative and collaborative nature of inspection work is also underlined by the significance attached to the items that involve a shared view or understanding of what is important: that inspectors agreed with principals on what constituted the most important aspects of the school's work, and that inspectors provided principals with appropriate opportunities to ask questions in relation to their evaluation findings.



# Chapter 5

## Findings and conclusions

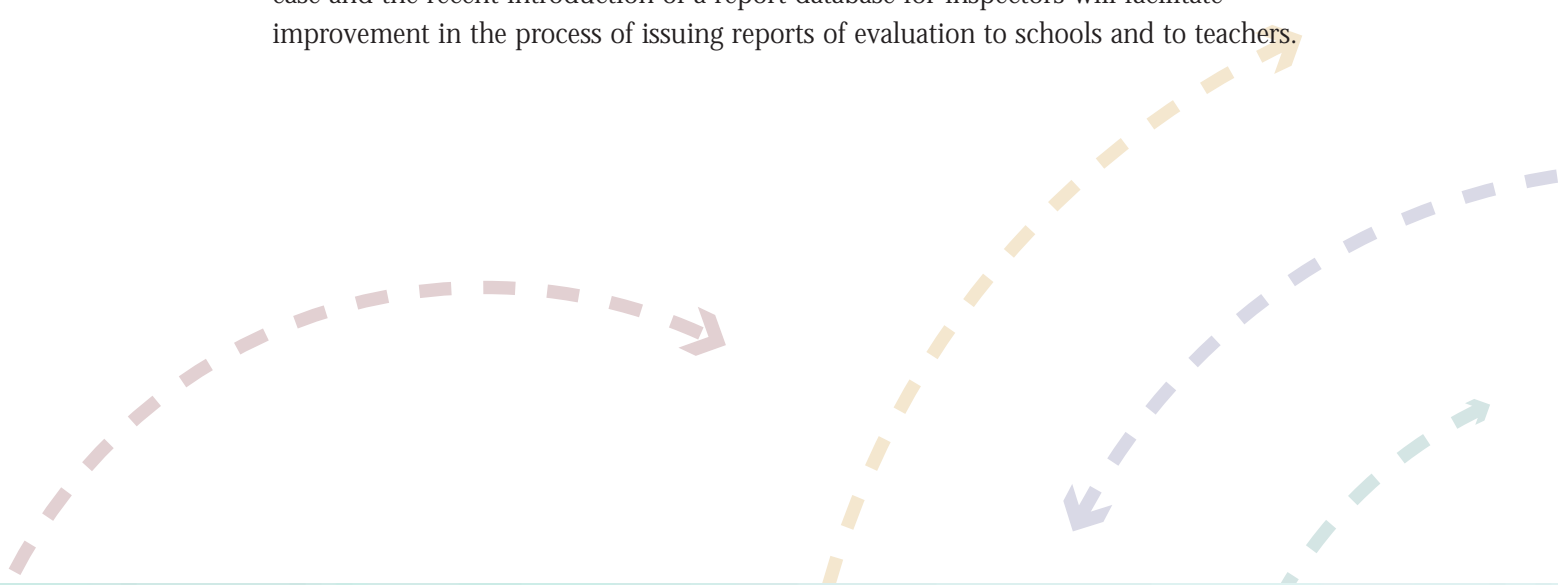
The evidence of the survey suggests a high degree of satisfaction with the way the Inspectorate is conducting evaluation activity in schools. On all aspects of its service, the Inspectorate received a strong endorsement.

The Inspectorate is seen as a highly professional group, and inspectors are regarded as agreeable and efficient by a large majority of teachers and principals. With regard to the factors driving this satisfaction, there are differences in perspective between teachers and principals. The results of the *key driver analysis* show that teachers place importance on the inspectors' interpersonal skills as well as professional expertise; principals, on the other hand, are more concerned with the extent to which the evaluation demonstrated a shared view of what is important for schools – or, more specifically, their own school.

The recruitment programmes and the model of training for inspectors are rigorous, and the success of these programmes is validated by the general response to this customer survey.

Altogether there was a high level of satisfaction with the Inspectorate among teachers. Slightly fewer than half the respondents (48.7 per cent) claimed to be “very satisfied” with the Inspectorate, and a further 40.7 per cent were “satisfied.” Aggregate scores show that 93 per cent of the teachers were satisfied with professional relationships with the Inspectorate in the context of school evaluation, while 87.7 per cent were satisfied with evaluation procedures and almost 87 per cent were satisfied with reporting (see appendix 3).

Despite the strong positive response there remain areas for improvement, most notably in the Inspectorate's administrative procedures. The main problems raised by teachers relate primarily to process issues, for example notice regarding meetings and the punctual provision of written reports to schools. Notwithstanding this the Inspectorate recorded very high satisfaction levels in other more complex and variable areas of the evaluation process. The problems identified by the respondents can be measured and improved with relative ease and the recent introduction of a report database for inspectors will facilitate improvement in the process of issuing reports of evaluation to schools and to teachers.





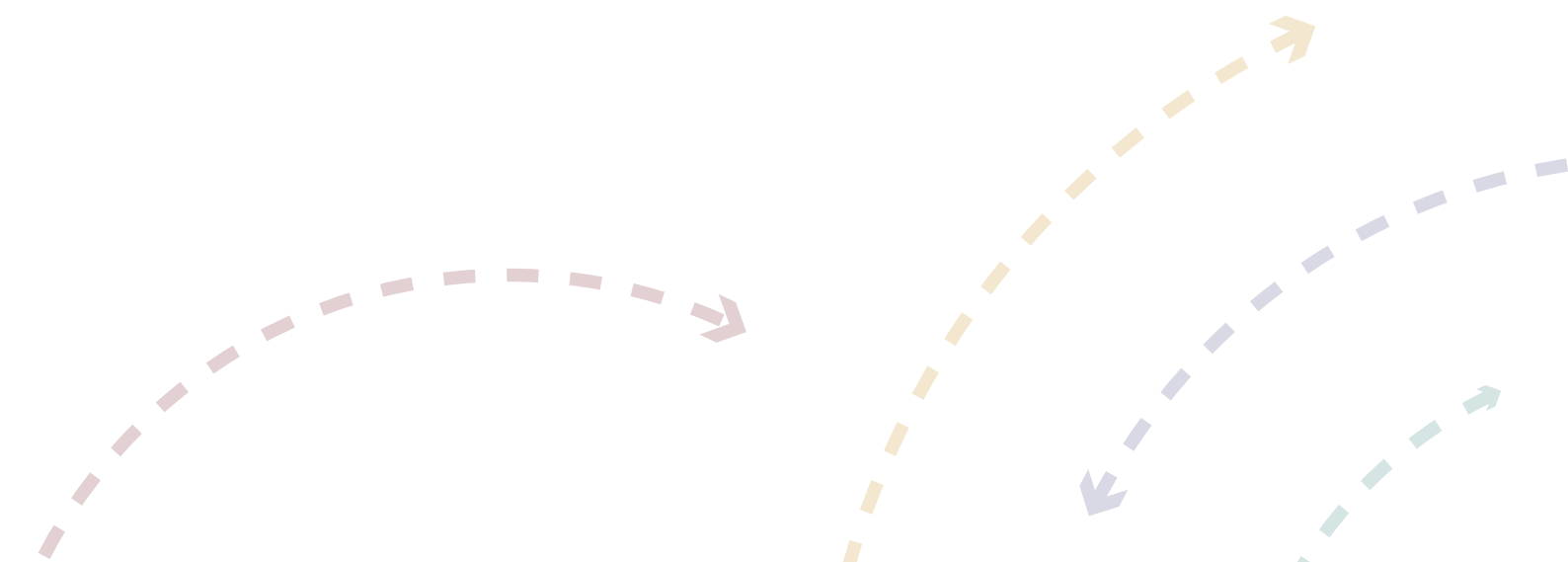
The survey responses also showed that almost 15 per cent of teachers perceived that there was a lack of consistency between inspectors' oral and written reports. The fact that the constructive advice offered by inspectors during oral feedback and post-evaluation meetings will not necessarily be printed in its entirety in the subsequent report may contribute to this impression. Furthermore, although almost 90 per cent of the teachers felt that strengths as well as opportunities for improvement were identified by the inspector, 21 per cent stated that an adequate opportunity was not provided for them to discuss the inspector's observations or to have their viewpoint listened to. As the key driver analysis identified the relationships established between the inspector and the school or teacher as important determinants of satisfaction, additional opportunities for teachers to comment on their own practice and on the inspector's findings should be factored into the evaluation process. It may also be worth while considering further research with those teachers who expressed dissatisfaction with the Inspectorate. By understanding their concerns or grievances in greater depth it may be possible to isolate those factors that contribute most to dissatisfaction.

Altogether there was a high level of satisfaction among principals with the Inspectorate, with 48 per cent claiming to be "very satisfied" with the Inspectorate and a further 44 per cent "satisfied." More than 94 per cent of the principals were satisfied with professional relationships between the Inspectorate and members of the school community in the context of school evaluation, more than 89 per cent were satisfied with evaluation procedures, and more than 91 per cent were satisfied with reporting. The main issue of concern for some principals regarding the Inspectorate was a perceived lack of recognition of school context factors. In total, 17.7 per cent of the principals expressed dissatisfaction in this respect. In contrast, more than 94 per cent of the principals found that the inspectors affirmed the work of the school management and of teachers and other school personnel, and more than 89 per cent found the written reports to be fair and balanced. It is possible, therefore, that there is a lack of communication by the Inspectorate with regard to the factors it is recognising in respect of school context and a failure to help principals and teachers understand how these factors are affecting the evaluation.

The rate of response from parents and boards of management was low (four percent and one percent, respectively). An alternative method should be considered for engaging with parents and boards of management in the future. This could be addressed by actively recruiting respondents within both groups for future survey work; and the possibility of conducting the questionnaire with parents or board members by e-mail or by telephone might be considered.

The Inspectorate is engaged in a continuous evaluation process which will be further informed by this survey. Over time these processes have been altered and improved, taking into account feedback from schools and from the inspectors themselves. The publication of various guides to evaluation that will illustrate clearly the time scales involved and the procedures to be followed during the evaluation process will be helpful for schools. For example, guidelines on whole-school evaluation and the probationary process will be published shortly.

It is hoped that this report will prove useful to the Inspectorate in carrying out its functions and that the findings can be used to inform future customer surveys, in both design and scope. Teachers, parents and pupils will expect nothing less from the Inspectorate.





# Appendix Appendix 1

## Questionnaire issued to teachers

### Customer Survey Questionnaire

for the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education & Science (DES) has asked **MORI Ireland** to carry out a survey of school teachers in relation to their dealings with the Inspectorate. The aim of the survey is to provide the Inspectorate with information that will help to improve services in the future.

As members of the Market Research Society, **MORI Ireland** adheres to a strict code of conduct that encompasses not only quality standards, but also ethical and legislative principles. In order to guarantee each respondent's confidentiality, we would request that no teacher sign the questionnaire. We would be very grateful if you would complete this questionnaire - it should only take between five and ten minutes to do so - and return it to us before 20/05/2005 in the envelope provided.

The questions focus on three aspects of inspection activity:

- Professional Relationships
- Evaluation Procedures
- Reporting

There are no right or wrong answers. It is only your opinion we are interested in, as your views are very important to the Inspectorate. Do remember that the answers you give will be treated with complete confidentiality.

### Teachers

School Level/Sector (please ring appropriate box)	Primary Level	Post-Primary Secondary	Post-Primary VEC	Post-Primary Community & Comprehensive
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Please place a tick in the appropriate box

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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#### Professional Relationships in the context of School Evaluation

1	Inspectors adopted a professional approach in their interactions with me as a teacher				
2	Inspectors were courteous and respectful of my professionalism				
3	Inspectors were sensitive in their dealings with me and treated me fairly during the course of evaluation work				
4	Inspectors were committed to developing a positive professional relationship with the school community				

Additional Comments:

(PLEASE TURN OVER – QUESTIONNAIRE CONTINUED OVERLEAF)

		Please place a tick in the appropriate box				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
<b>Evaluation Procedures</b>						
5	Appropriate notice was given of the general inspection visit and all meetings were agreed in advance					
6	Inspectors took account of school/class context factors during the evaluation process					
7	Inspectors adopted fair procedures and were professional in gathering evaluation evidence					
8	Inspectors provided opportunities for me to discuss their observations and listened to my viewpoint					
9	Strengths, as well as opportunities and recommendations, were identified					
10	Feedback and advice were given in a supportive and constructive manner					
<b>Additional Comments:</b>						

		Please place a tick in the appropriate box				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
<b>Reporting</b>						
11	Inspectors affirmed my work in the classroom					
12	Inspectors provided constructive advice about ways of improving educational provision for pupils					
13	Oral feedback by inspectors was conducted in a sensitive and professional manner and key messages were communicated effectively					
14	Written reports were fair and balanced					
15	Written reports were clear and provided me with valid and constructive recommendations for development					
16	Consistency was maintained between oral and written reporting					
17	Written reports were received in the school in a timely manner					
<b>Additional Comments:</b>						
<b>Finally, please indicate your overall level of satisfaction with the Inspectorate by placing a tick in the appropriate box</b>		Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	
<b>Overall Satisfaction</b>						

Please place a tick in the appropriate box

Age		Gender	
< 24 years		Male	
25 – 40 years		Female	
41 – 54 years			
55+ years			

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Any further comments may be recorded on additional sheets and returned with the completed questionnaire.



## Appendix 2

### Questionnaire issued to School Principals

#### Customer Survey Questionnaire

for the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education & Science (DES) has asked **MORI Ireland** to carry out a survey of school principals in relation to their dealings with the Inspectorate. The aim of the survey is to provide the Inspectorate with information that will help to improve services in the future.

As members of the Market Research Society, **MORI Ireland** adheres to a strict code of conduct that encompasses not only quality standards, but also ethical and legislative principles. In order to guarantee each respondent's confidentiality, we would request that no principal sign the questionnaire. We would be very grateful if you would complete this questionnaire - it should only take between five and ten minutes to do so - and return it to us before 20/05/2005 in the envelope provided.

The questions focus on three aspects of inspection activity:

- Professional Relationships
- Evaluation Procedures
- Reporting

There are no right or wrong answers. It is only your opinion we are interested in, as your views are very important to the Inspectorate. Do remember that the answers you give will be treated with complete confidentiality.

#### School principal

School Level/Sector (please ring appropriate box)	Primary Level	Post-Primary Secondary	Post-Primary VEC	Post-Primary Community & Comprehensive
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Please place a tick in the appropriate box

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>Professional Relationships in the context of School Evaluation</b>					
1	Inspectors adopted a professional approach in their interactions with me as school principal.				
2	Inspectors were courteous and respectful of the professionalism of the principal and teachers in the school.				
3	Inspectors were sensitive in their dealings with individual members of staff in the school and treated people fairly during the course of evaluation work.				
4	Inspectors were committed to developing a positive professional relationship with the school community				

**Additional Comments:**

(PLEASE TURN OVER – QUESTIONNAIRE CONTINUED OVERLEAF)



Please place a tick in the appropriate box		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>Evaluation Procedures</b>					
5	Effective administrative arrangements were made in relation to organisation of the evaluation.				
6	Inspectors communicated effectively with school personnel while engaging in evaluation activity in the school				
7	Inspectors took account of school context factors when evaluating the school.				
8	Inspectors adopted fair procedures and were professional in gathering evaluation evidence.				
9	Inspectors paid adequate attention to the most important aspects of the school's work				
<b>Additional Comments:</b>					
Please place a tick in the appropriate box					
<b>Reporting</b>		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
10	Inspectors affirmed the work of school management and of teachers and other school personnel.				
11	Inspectors provided constructive advice to the school about ways of improving educational provision for pupils.				
12	Oral feedback by inspectors was conducted in a sensitive and professional manner and key messages were communicated clearly.				
13	Written reports were fair and balanced.				
14	Written reports were clearly written and provided the school with valid and constructive recommendations for development.				
15	School personnel were provided with appropriate opportunities to ask questions in relation to findings communicated orally and in writing.				
<b>Additional Comments:</b>					
<b>Please indicate your overall level of satisfaction with the Inspectorate by placing a tick in the appropriate box</b>		Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
<b>Overall Satisfaction</b>					

Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaire  
Any further comments may be recorded on additional sheets  
and returned with the completed questionnaire





## Appendix 3

### Aggregate scores from questionnaires

#### 3.1 Aggregate scores from the teachers' survey

Professional relationships in the context of school evaluation	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Dissatisfied	3.1	3.1
Dissatisfied	3.9	7.0
Satisfied	37.6	44.6
Very Satisfied	55.4	100.0

Evaluation procedures	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Dissatisfied	3.5	3.5
Dissatisfied	8.8	12.3
Satisfied	43.6	55.9
Very Satisfied	44.1	100.0

Reporting	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Dissatisfied	3.4	3.4
Dissatisfied	9.8	13.2
Satisfied	47.5	60.7
Very Satisfied	39.3	100.0

#### 3.2 Aggregate scores from the school principals' survey

Professional relationships in the context of school evaluation	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Dissatisfied	2.7	2.7
Dissatisfied	3.2	5.9
Satisfied	30.6	36.5
Very Satisfied	63.5	100.0

Evaluation procedures	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Dissatisfied	4.0	4.0
Dissatisfied	6.8	10.8
Satisfied	41.2	52.0
Very Satisfied	48.0	100.0

Reporting	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Dissatisfied	2.5	2.5
Dissatisfied	6.0	8.5
Satisfied	43.9	52.4
Very Satisfied	47.6	100.0







Customer Survey → Notes

