



ALDIC

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN THE CURRICULUM

working for pupils with English as an additional language

c/o Fieldhouse School Greenbank Road Rochdale OL12 0HZ

HMCI David Bell
Ofsted
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

21 March 2004

Dear Mr Bell

I am writing on behalf of National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum (NALDIC). NALDIC is the subject association for teachers of English as an additional language. It is dedicated to promoting the learning and achievement of bilingual pupils and draws its membership from those who work in the field of English as an Additional Language (EAL) and bilingualism in schools, universities and other educational institutions.

In 1996 NALDIC produced a paper outlining the results of a survey of inspections in three authorities - one inner city, one suburban and one shire county. The findings then were that, particularly in the shire county, any inspector might be given the brief of inspecting EAL. Since 1999, inspectors have been required to be endorsed for the inspection of EAL and there has been a requirement that inspections of schools where the percentage of pupils for whom English is an additional language is high should include a focus on EAL. We recognise that these changes have led to an improvement in the quality of inspection of this specialist area.

However, we would like to draw attention to a number of issues which have come to our attention regarding the current training for inspectors and arrangements for the inspection of EAL in schools under the new Framework.

1. 'Inspecting and Reporting of EAL' training

As a professional association we welcomed the introduction of specialist training required of all inspectors endorsed to inspect EAL in 2003. However, in the light of experience to date we have the following concerns.

- a) This one-day training appears to have been used as a qualification for endorsement rather than as additional training for inspectors who are already deemed competent by virtue of their previous qualifications and experience.
- b) A single day's training (with half day pre-reading task), however well designed and delivered, is not in our opinion sufficient to provide an inspector with little previous experience in this field with adequate knowledge and understanding to be able to inspect EAL in primary and secondary schools
- c) We understand that the contracts for provision of this training will cease in April 2004. It will be apparent from our comments above that we believe it is important that specialist training for inspectors of EAL is not only continued, but extended.

We therefore seek clarification on the following questions:

- Is completion of the one-day training regarded as sufficient evidence of competency in EAL or is it used to support and update inspectors who have previously provided evidence of competency for endorsement purposes?
- Will this training programme continue after April 2004 and, if so, will it be modified and extended?

2. Training in Inspection Skills

A number of our members responded to your recent advertisements for potential team inspectors, noting that applications are particularly welcome from 'candidates with EAL experience'. These potential inspectors have encountered difficulties because EAL is treated as an 'aspect' rather than a discipline with its own related pedagogy. Trainees on inspection training courses are required to undertake a 'subject' in addition to their EAL specialism, although this is not clearly explained during the application process. Whilst this may not be a cause of difficulty for Primary trainees, it can cause significant problems for trainee Secondary inspectors who may not wish to inspect subjects other than EAL.

The experience of a number of these trainees is that their EAL specialism is clearly regarded as a minor issue in comparison to their 'subject'. This affects their participation during training sessions, their judgements during training inspections and their assessment. A number of these trainees have felt that the process has marginalized them and their expertise. As many of these EAL specialists are from minority ethnic backgrounds and all have a wealth of experience in multi-ethnic schools, this is a particularly disappointing outcome from a promising initiative to increase the levels of EAL expertise and experience within inspection teams.

We therefore question the status accorded to EAL which appears to be the main cause of the difficulties experienced by trainees and seek clarification as to how OfSTED will seek to address these difficulties to continue to develop an appropriately experienced cadre of team inspectors.

3. Delivery of inspection of EAL under the new Framework

- a) We are concerned that the quality of inspection of EAL is suffering under the new Framework. With smaller inspection teams, there is a need for teams to cover the greatest range of subjects with fewer inspector days. Specialist inspectors who are only endorsed for EAL are finding it increasingly difficult to be included in inspection teams, and where they are included, their time with the team is often so limited that they do not feel able to impact effectively on the process.
- b) Inspecting EAL is challenging because it is by definition happening across the curriculum and the provision for such learners is a whole school issue. We have evidence that under the new framework, inspection of EAL is increasingly being carried out by team inspectors with limited training and understanding of the issues **or** by specialists who have insufficient time with the team to make robust judgements about whole school provision building on their own observations and the observations of colleague inspectors.
- c) We are concerned that the revised handbook makes scant reference to EAL with exemplification when compared to SEN. The handbook is the first point of reference for most inspectors, and yet there is insufficient guidance and exemplification to guide non-specialist inspectors, not all of whom will be adequately familiar with the thorough EAL subject guidance for inspectors (3 – 11 and 11 – 16)
- d) We are disappointed that findings regarding EAL are not now given a separate section but are subsumed within the new shorter reports.

As a professional association, we believe adequate attention to EAL is vital to the continuing effectiveness and validity of the inspection process. We urge you to consider the impact that the current new Framework is having on the *extent* of EAL provision which is inspected by EAL specialists.

4. Subject guidance for Inspectors

The current EAL subject guidance for inspectors (3 – 11 and 11 – 16) has provided valuable information through both the general comments and the exemplar lesson descriptions. We are anxious to ensure that EAL specific guidance continues to support inspectors under the new Framework and would be greatly concerned if this subject guidance were to be subsumed or otherwise diminished. We therefore seek clarification on the future of this guidance under the process to align the subject guidance with the new Framework requirements.

As a subject association we are anxious to ensure that the inspection process continues to contribute to improving the quality of provision for EAL learners in our schools. This letter draws attention to some emerging issues regarding the inspection of EAL which may undermine this purpose. We would welcome an opportunity to discuss the issues we have raised and hope that it will be possible to arrange a meeting.

Yours sincerely

Ian Jones
Chair NALDIC