Thank you for the opportunity to feedback regarding Education Scotland.

The following are a number of concerns:

1. Since Education Scotland has absorbed both LTS and HMIe, we have a national body who both sets the agenda and polices it. On the one hand this may seem to make sense. On the other it could seem to be too incestuous. This dichotomy I believe, leads to a sense of mistrust in Education Scotland and thereby reduces any potential positive impact of their work. I believe this should be looked at again.

2. As has been covered before, the vast amount of information and ‘advice’ which has been published by Education Scotland becomes unhelpful the more there is. I appreciate that there has been significant work with Education Scotland to rationalise advice and guidance on-line, and I believe this a significant improvement. However, I believe that there is more that could be done to simplify and declutter. In addition, there is a legacy of contradictory information overload that schools need to be empowered to move on from.

3. Clearly CfE has been a torturous journey which is still appears to entail contradictory and bureaucratic preparation, assessment and record keeping. Schools need less assessment. We need to ensure that the future genuinely reduces bureaucracy, without demanding the generation of extra bureaucracy to evidence this!

4. Annual Education Scotland Advice note. This seems to be a process which does not articulate properly with SISE. Neither, as far as I am aware is there partnership working with local authorities and schools in its preparation. While it may seem top down, it is better to be honest and be open that the Education Scotland and inspection process is top-down and ensure that advice notes articulate with improvement planning, school and Local Authority priorities and is scheduled appropriately?

5. Fundamentally, I believe that there is too much expected of schools. Too many themes and too many initiatives and too much information which obfuscates the mental space for staff to focus and drive forward improvements for our young people. ES appears to be unaccountable, is not externally evaluated, and seems to take no responsibility for its role in placing the excessive burden on schools which has led to the recent industrial action.

The following are positive areas and areas of improvement

1. Clearly we need a body such as Education Scotland. We need the research and work that they do. We need an inspection body and process. We just need a body which we can trust and we need a bit more realism.
2. As indicated above, the ES website is clearer and easier to access, but it is still very difficult to access key messages and priorities.

3. The new Briefing Note (from August 2016) for schools being inspected is clear and demonstrates a simplification in the preparation for schools being inspected.

4. The Self-Evaluation Summary Paper is less bureaucratic and I believe would form a good basis for schools’ annual SISE procedures and to inform the annual Standards & Quality report. It would be helpful to work more closely with Authorities and schools to ensure that SISE articulates with ES requirements across Scotland.