



**Mel Ainscow**

January 4, hrs 9.00 – Room 112

#### **THE NEXT BIG CHALLENGE: INCLUSIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

Inclusion is the major challenge facing educational systems around the world. In economically poorer countries the priority has to be with the millions of children who never see the inside of a classroom. Meanwhile, in wealthier countries many young people leave school with no worthwhile qualifications, whilst others are placed in various forms of special provision away from mainstream educational experiences, and some simply choose to drop out since the lessons seem irrelevant to their lives. Reflecting on evidence from a programme of international research carried out over the last ten years, this presentation will provide a framework for determining levers that can help to ease systems in a more inclusive direction. The focus will be on factors within schools that influence the development of thinking and practice, as well as wider contextual factors that may constrain such developments. It will be argued that many of the barriers experienced by learners arise from existing ways of thinking. Consequently, strategies for developing more inclusive schools have to involve *interruptions* to thinking, in order to encourage an exploration of overlooked possibilities for moving practice forward.

**Mel Ainscow** is Professor of Education at the University of Manchester, UK. He served as Dean of Research, 1998-2001. Previously a head teacher, local education authority inspector and lecturer at the University of Cambridge, his work attempts to explore connections between inclusion, teacher development and school improvement. A particular feature of this research involves the development and use of participatory methods of inquiry that set out to make a direct impact on thinking and practice in systems, schools and classrooms. Mel was director of a UNESCO Teacher Education Project on inclusive education which involved research and development in over 80 countries, and is co-director of the school improvement network "Improving the Quality of Education for All (IQEA)". He was until recently a member of the National Curriculum and Assessment Committee; he is a consultant to UNESCO, UNICEF and Save the Children; and is co-director of the Excellence in Cities Leadership Develop Unit.