

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRIMARY INSPECTION



Ballydown Primary School and Nursery Unit, Banbridge, County Down

Controlled, co-educational DE Ref No (501-1617)

Report of a Sustaining Improvement Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in June 2019



The Education and Training Inspectorate
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Sustaining Improvement Inspection of Ballydown Primary School and Nursery Unit, Banbridge, County Down (501-1617)

Introduction

The previous inspection in February 2016 evaluated the overall effectiveness of Ballydown Primary School and Nursery Unit as having a high level of capacity for sustained improvement. Since the last inspection, the school has been accredited with an Eco-school Silver Award. The school and the nursery unit are in the second year of a shared education partnership with a local, maintained primary school and a maintained nursery unit. A new principal was appointed in January 2019. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 3 June 2019.

Four of the teaching unions which make up the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) have declared industrial action primarily in relation to a pay dispute. This includes non-co-operation with the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). Prior to the inspection, the school informed the ETI that none of the staff would be co-operating with the inspectors. The leadership co-operated with the inspection in relation to safeguarding responsibilities. The ETI has a statutory duty to monitor, inspect and report on the quality of education under Article 102 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. Therefore, the inspection proceeded and the following evaluations are based on the evidence as made available at the time of the inspection.

Focus of the inspection

Owing to the school's participation in industrial action:

- the inspection was unable to focus on evaluating the extent to which the school is capable of demonstrating its capacity to effect improvement through self-evaluation and effective school planning; and
- a line of inquiry was not selected by the school from the development plan priorities.

Key findings

- The group of year 6 children, who met with the inspector, spoke with enthusiasm and pride about their school. They are inquisitive, articulate children who appreciate having a wide range of learning experiences, including: educational trips, guitar and violin lessons, table-tennis and athletics. The children enjoy performing at public events, researching interesting topics and engaging in information and communication technology (ICT) activities.
- The children take on eagerly their roles of responsibility, in particular, they enjoy reading to the younger children. Through their work on the School Council, they have made a positive impact on the school environment, including acquiring 'buddy huts' for the foundation stage and key stage (KS) 1 children and fundraising to purchase sports equipment, for the playground.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the line of inquiry; and
- the quality of learning and teaching within the classrooms.

Safeguarding

During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education. The new principal is taking a systematic approach to reviewing and updating policies in line with the current Department of Education (DE) guidance.

The group of year 6 children, who met with the inspector, report that they feel safe in school and on school trips. They are knowledgeable about internet safety and farm safety. The children know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.

However, owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the outworking of the arrangements for safeguarding in the school.

Conclusion

Owing to the impact of the action short of strike being taken by the staff, the ETI is unable to assure parents/carers, the wider school community and stakeholders of the quality of education being provided for the children. The school is a high priority for future inspection with no further notice.

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