

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRIMARY INSPECTION



Bocombra Primary School and Nursery Unit, Portadown, County Armagh

Controlled, co-educational DE Ref. No. 501-6138

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



The Education and Training Inspectorate
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Introduction

The previous inspection in September 2016 evaluated the overall effectiveness of Bocombra Primary School and Nursery Unit as having a high level of capacity for sustained improvement. The school has achieved their second Eco Flag, the Sustrans¹ Gold School Mark Award and recently gained recognition as a Forest School. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 3 October 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 teachers would be co-operating with the inspection. The senior leadership co-operated with the inspection team in relation to their 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

- A group of year 6 children met with the inspectors and spoke positively about their learning experiences, in particular, the clear strategies in place for receiving help with their work. They appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities available and their opportunities to learn alongside children from another school as part of a shared education partnership.
- The children reported that they have opportunities to develop their leadership skills through their roles as house captains, librarians and members of the school council where they have weekly responsibilities and opportunities to present their work to the school. In addition, the children spoke enthusiastically about their responsibility for saving energy within the classroom and recycling as members of the eco-council.

The ETI was unable to evaluate:

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

¹ Sustrans means sustainable transport. The Gold Award is awarded to a school that has demonstrated ongoing commitment to promoting active and sustainable travel over several years, which has led to significant and lasting organisational, cultural and behavioural changes.

Safeguarding

During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education. The inspectors met with a group of year 6 children; they reported that they feel safe in school. They know what to do and who to talk to if they are concerned 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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