

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRIMARY INSPECTION



Portstewart Primary School and Nursery Unit, Portstewart,
County Londonderry

Controlled, co-educational DE Ref No (301-2250)

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



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Sustaining Improvement Inspection of Portstewart Primary School, Portstewart, County Londonderry (301-2250)

Introduction

The previous inspection in May 2016 evaluated the overall effectiveness of Portstewart Primary School and Nursery Unit as having a high level of capacity for sustained improvement. The school continues to engage and consolidate further its shared education partnership with a neighbouring maintained primary school. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 22 May 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 inspectors. The senior leadership co-operated with the inspectors in relation to their leadership and 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

The purpose of the SII was to evaluate the extent to which the school is capable of demonstrating its capacity to effect improvement through self-evaluation and effective school development planning. The school also provided evidence of provision for safeguarding as part of the inspection.

The line of inquiry during the SII was:

- to assess the effectiveness of the school's use of digital technologies and media in promoting better literacy and stimulating higher quality learning experiences across the curriculum.

Key findings

- A group of children from year 7, who met with the inspectors, reflected positively about the many opportunities they have to engage in the digital arts and with creative media production. They spoke, in particular, about benefitting from their experiences in creating and contributing to a wide range of magazine style items for broadcast on the school's radio station which is used as a key driver for supporting literacy-related work and which broadcasts the children's work to the rest of the school. From the good range of children's work presented and associated planning, the media-infused learning experiences develop well the children's communication, entrepreneurial and social skills, along with supporting their own perceptions of self-esteem and confidence. The 'INTO' film club, in particular, was highlighted by the children as promoting good quality literacy-related experiences.

- The school reports that the children enjoy their learning in media-related literacy work and this finding is reflected in what the children reported to the inspectors. Well planned opportunities afforded to the children to enjoy their learning through digital technologies was displayed in a range of the children's written work, in video- recordings, through photographic evidence and various planning documents. The work observed provides authentic support for developing the children's knowledge, understanding and skills in literacy, along with specific technical skills such as script development, sound editing and mixing, along with gaining a better understanding of the business side of radio and film production.
- The school's development of media-related support for literacy provides a culture where oracy is promoted, confidence gained and where a high value is placed on developing good quality literacy through well-conceived opportunities to promote purposeful reading, writing and talking and listening in engaging contexts for children and which allows them to share their work with a real audience.
- The capable and committed senior leadership of the school continues to encourage an effective culture of developing more engaging and real and relevant learning experiences for the children. The school's commitment to shared education has resulted in a well-embedded link with a neighbouring primary school, whose joint endeavours recently resulted in achieving a UK-wide award for innovation in ecology education through highly distinctive learning in science and technology.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the lines 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 (DE). In discussion with the inspectors, a group of year 6 children stated that they feel safe and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or welfare. However, owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the arrangements for safeguarding in the school.

The school needs to:

- continue with its ongoing schedule of updating and ratifying its suite of pastoral-related policies in line with the DE guidance.

Conclusion

Owing to the impact of 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 provided for the children. This will be reflected in future inspection activity.

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