

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRIMARY INSPECTION



St Columba's Primary School, Straw, County Derry

Maintained, co-educational DE Ref No: 303-2268

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



The Education and Training Inspectorate
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Introduction

The previous inspection in October 2016 evaluated the overall effectiveness of St Columba's Primary School as having a high level of capacity for sustained improvement. The school participates in a shared education partnership with a local, controlled primary school and in an eco-schools collaboration with the four primary and post-primary schools in the area. Since the time of the last inspection, St Columba's Primary School has achieved awards in: science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM); environmental; and, global learning initiatives. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 25 November 2019.

The trade unions which make up the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) have declared industrial action primarily in relation to a pay dispute, and also workload and other management issues. The industrial action 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 in relation to the school's safeguarding responsibilities. The ETI has a statutory duty to monitor, inspect and report on the standards of education and professional practice among teachers 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

- In discussion with a group of year 6 children, they talked enthusiastically about their learning across the curriculum, including how the school's reward system is used to promote positive behaviour and to enhance learning. They explained how they develop their leadership skills through membership of the school- and eco-councils, as well as understanding the importance of social and environmental issues through the global learning programme. The children highlighted their enjoyment of extra- and co-curricular activities both in school and in the wider community.

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 children report that they feel safe in school and online 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 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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