

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRIMARY INSPECTION



St Finian's Primary School, Newtownards, County Down

Maintained, co-educational DE Ref No: 403-3017

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



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

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Introduction

The follow-up inspection in June 2016 evaluated the school as demonstrating the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 21 October 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 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

- The group of year 7 children report that they have very good opportunities to develop their leadership capabilities through, for example, the eco-council and 'playground buddies.' They also talked enthusiastically about their involvement in shared education activities with two neighbouring schools.

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. The children report that they feel safe in school and that they 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.

The school needs to:

- complete a risk assessment for the entry arrangements to 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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