

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRIMARY INSPECTION



St Francis' Primary School, Aghaderg, County Down

Maintained, co-educational DE Ref No (503-6457)

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

Sustaining Improvement Inspection of St Francis Primary School, Aghaderg, County Down (503-6457)

Introduction

The previous inspection in April 2016 evaluated the overall effectiveness of St Francis' Primary School as having a high level of capacity for sustained improvement. Since the last inspection, the school has been awarded an Eco-School Green Flag. The school is in its second year of a shared education partnership with a local controlled primary school. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 13 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 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 enthusiastically about their learning experiences, such as, the project work on the Vikings, the 'mathematics week' of activities, and the collaborative work with children from another school as part of shared education. They enjoy particularly the outdoor learning, the sports blitz competitions and art activities, including visiting their local art gallery.
- The children have appropriate opportunities to develop leadership skills through the School Council, where they have raised funds for charity and contributed to developing the school's outdoor environment; they create annually their own classroom rules which they describe as being sensible and fair.

The ETI was unable to evaluate:

- 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 year 6 children report that they feel safe in school and on school trips; they 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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