

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRIMARY INSPECTION



St Malachy's Primary School, Armagh

Maintained, co-educational DE Ref No (503-1133)

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

Sustaining Improvement Inspection of St Malachy's Primary School, Armagh (503-1133)

Introduction

The previous inspection in April 2016 evaluated the overall effectiveness of St Malachy's Primary School as having a high level of capacity for sustained improvement. There have been significant changes to staffing since the last inspection: a new vice-principal, special education needs co-ordinator, numeracy co-ordinator and an assessment co-ordinator have been appointed. The senior leadership team (SLT) has been expanded to include the literacy, numeracy and assessment co-ordinators. There has also been a reduction in staffing levels from ten teachers to eight. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 3 and 4 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 teachers would be co-operating with the inspectors. The senior leadership co-operated with the inspectors in relation to leadership, curricular 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 lines of inquiry during the SII were:

- to consolidate and improve further the children's comprehension and inferential skills; and
- to develop problem-solving skills in real-life contexts to improve the outcomes attained by the children in numeracy.

Key findings

- There is evidence of appropriate, ongoing child-centred improvement work in the school, led effectively by the SLT and informed through the effective analysis of the school's data and high quality self-evaluation. The key priorities identified in the coherent school development plan concentrate appropriately on improving further the quality of the children's learning experiences and the outcomes that they attain. The co-ordinators are empowered to lead on their areas of responsibility and there is a shared strategic vision for future developments in the school.
- A group of children from year 6, who met with the inspectors, talked positively about their experiences in school. They highlighted, in particular, their enjoyment of learning, the extensive opportunities they have to engage in a range of activities beyond the classroom and the support they receive from their teachers.

- A group of children from year 7, who met with the inspector, spoke positively about the reading opportunities available in school. They read from a wide range of genres and authors and are able to: explain and justify their reading preferences; read with fluency and expression; and, read for inference. The children report their enjoyment of the computerised reading programme.
- A group of children from year 7, who met with the inspectors, spoke with enthusiasm about their experiences in mathematics. They enjoy the challenge of practical activities which are focused on using mathematics in practical, real-life situations. The children show positive dispositions to numeracy and are secure in their knowledge of key mathematical concepts. They use mathematical language competently and apply successfully a range of strategies to solve problems.
- The children are developing well as independent learners, reflecting the school's mission statement "unlocking the full potential of each individual, developing confident and independent learners". The school's internal assessment data shows that most of the children perform at the expected level or above the expected level in both literacy and numeracy.

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 issued by the Department of Education. The year 6 children, with whom the inspectors met, reported that they feel safe in the school and that they are aware of 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 teachers, the ETI is unable to assure parents/carers, the wider school community and stakeholders of the quality of education being provided for the children. This will be reflected in future inspection activity.

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