

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRIMARY INSPECTION



St Mary's Primary School and Nursery Unit, Cushendall, County Antrim

Controlled, co-educational DE Ref No (303-0894)

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



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

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CUSTOMER
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Sustaining Improvement Inspection of St Mary's Primary School and Nursery Unit, Cushendall, County Antrim (303-0894)

Introduction

The previous inspection in October 2012, evaluated the overall effectiveness of St Mary's Primary School and Nursery Unit as good¹. The school took part in the pilot of the sustaining improvement inspection (SII) in March 2016. A new principal took up post in November 2018. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 9 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 principal and designated teacher for child protection co-operated with the inspection team 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 inspector met with a group of year 6 children who spoke very positively about all aspects of school life; they highlighted their enjoyment of participating in taster golf sessions and running the daily mile around the school grounds. The children appreciate the range of after-school activities offered in the school, for example: camogie; hurling; football; coding; and Spanish. There are opportunities for the children to develop their leadership skills through the Eco-committee and as class librarians.
- It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget in order to address the current and future needs of the children and the staff.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the lines of inquiry; and
- the quality of learning and teaching within the classrooms.

¹ From September 2015, the overall effectiveness of a school evaluated previously as good has been reported as the school demonstrating the capacity to identify and bring about improvement.

Safeguarding

During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education. 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:

- construct and consult on a Managing Critical Incidents Policy; and
- review the procedure for completing risk assessments.

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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