

PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Mary's Primary School and
Nursery Unit, Mullaghbawn,
County Armagh

Maintained, co-educational

Report of a Sustaining Improvement
Inspection (Involving Action Short of
Strike) in November 2018



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
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CUSTOMER
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Sustaining Improvement Inspection of St Mary's Primary School and Nursery Unit, Mullaghbawn, County Armagh (503-6087)

Introduction

The previous inspection in November, 2015 evaluated the overall effectiveness of St Mary's Primary School and Nursery Unit as having the capacity to identify and bring about improvement. In the interim, the school has been engaged in partnership work with a school in County Louth, as part of the PEACE IV shared education programme. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 26 November 2018.

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 the principal and staff would not be co-operating with the inspectors. 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
- lines of inquiry were not selected by the school from the development plan priorities.

Key findings

- A group of year 6 children spoke very positively about their learning experiences including the support provided by the staff and the trips and extra-curricular activities the children enjoy. The children reported that they appreciate the work of the school council, which has led to tangible improvements in aspects of school life.

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 did not provide evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect, or reflect broadly, the guidance from the Department of Education¹. In discussions with the inspector, a group of year 6 children reported that they feel very happy and safe in school and 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, or discuss with staff, the outworking of the arrangements for safeguarding in the school.

¹ The Department of Education will seek assurance from the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools that they are working with the school in relation to the inspection report.

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 and safeguarding being provided for the children. The school is a high priority for future inspection with no further notice.

The ETI will return to the school within six weeks to evaluate and report on the arrangements for safeguarding.

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