

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRIMARY INSPECTION



St Mary's Primary School, Dechomet, County Down

Maintained, co-educational DE Ref No: 503-3011

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



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

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Introduction

The previous inspection in September 2016 evaluated the overall effectiveness of St Mary's Primary School as having a high level of capacity for sustained improvement. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 16 October 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 not be co-operating with the inspection. The senior leadership co-operated with the inspection team in relation to their 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
- lines of inquiry were not selected by the school from the development plan priorities.

Key findings

- A group of children from year 6, who met with the inspector, were confident, articulate and very proud of their school. They engaged easily with the inspector and talked very positively about their experiences in school. The children highlighted, in particular: the very good opportunities they have to participate in a wide range of activities beyond the classroom; the caring staff; their enjoyment of active learning activities; and, being challenged to use their creativity.

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 issued by the Department of Education. The 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. The school is a high priority for future inspection with no further notice.

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