

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRIMARY INSPECTION



St Mary's Primary School, Fivemiletown, County Tyrone

Maintained, co-educational DE Ref No (503-2736)

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



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

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Sustaining Improvement Inspection of St Mary's Primary School, Fivemiletown, County Tyrone (503-2736)

Introduction

The previous inspection in December 2015 evaluated the overall effectiveness of St Mary's Primary School as having a high level of capacity for sustained improvement. Since then, the school has continued to engage in a shared education partnership with a local controlled primary school and a local controlled nursery school. The school has been successful in obtaining a Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) grant for STEM¹ activities. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 1 April 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 principal and the designated teacher for child protection co-operated 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
- a line of inquiry was not selected by the school from the development plan priorities.

Key findings

- A group of articulate and confident year six and seven children spoke very enthusiastically about school life and the roles they have in decision making, including annually devising the school rules. They explained well the opportunities they have to develop leadership capabilities through being 'Guardian Angels' for new children, representatives on the School Councils and as 'digital leaders.'
- The children report that they enjoy the wide-ranging learning opportunities they have, such as, Mandarin language lessons, the financial management visiting speaker and participation in sports' tournaments. They are very proud of their Royal Dublin Society (RDS) Primary School Science trophy and their Eco-School Green Flag. The children completed successfully the 'Heartstart' life saving skills programme and were presented recently with their certificates.

¹ STEM is a curriculum based on the idea of educating children in four specific disciplines — science, technology, engineering and mathematics — in an interdisciplinary and applied approach.

- 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:

- a line 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. In discussion with a group of year six and seven children, they reported that they feel safe in school and during school trips; they know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being. They have a very good knowledge of farm safety, cycling safety and how to keep safe online.
- However, owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate 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.

Health and Safety

- The senior leadership and governors need to consult with the Department of Education regarding either the need or not for a fence to secure the Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) transformer located within the school grounds.
- Three of the internal doors do not have visibility panels.

Risk assessments are in place and these matters have been brought to the attention of the Education Authority (EA) by the school.

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