

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRIMARY INSPECTION



St Mary's Star of the Sea Primary School, Belfast

Maintained, co-educational DE ref no (103-6048)

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



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

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Sustaining Improvement Inspection of St Mary's Star of the Sea Primary School, Belfast (103-6048)

Introduction

The previous sustaining improvement inspection in January 2016 evaluated the overall effectiveness of St Mary's Star of the Sea Primary School as having the capacity for sustained improvement. In the interim, a new vice-principal has been appointed. A further sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 10 January 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 almost all of the teachers would not be co-operating with the inspectors. The principal and designated teacher co-operated with the inspection in relation to their leadership 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

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 development planning; and
- lines of inquiry were not selected by the school from the development plan priorities.

Key findings

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 from the Department of Education. The children reported that they feel safe, happy and cared for in school; they know what to do and who to speak to if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being. However, owing to 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 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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