



*The Education and Training Inspectorate -  
Promoting Improvement*

**Providing Inspection Services for  
Department of Education  
Department for Employment and Learning  
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure**



**Education and Training Inspectorate**

**Brackenagh West Primary School  
Kilkeel**

**Inspection Letter**

**June 2015**

**INSPECTION OF BRACKENAGH WEST PRIMARY SCHOOL, KILKEEL (501-6098)**  
**3 JUNE 2015**

**INSPECTION LETTER**

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) notified Brackenagh West Primary School of its forthcoming inspection scheduled for 1-5 June 2015 in line with its standard inspection notification protocols. Prior to the inspection, the school informed the ETI that 55% of the teachers would not be co-operating with the inspectors on advice from their trade union. Five of the teachers in the school are involved in action short of strike. The action is not connected with the inspection process itself. Where the inspection is not carried out in full, parents and stakeholders have no complete external evaluation of the quality of education being provided by the school.

The inspectors were able to:

- observe learning and teaching in nine lessons, including the quality of the provision in the foundation stage classes;
- read and review the children's work in the limited number of the classes visited;
- meet the co-ordinators responsible for literacy, special educational needs and personal development and mutual understanding (PDMU);
- discuss the governance of the school with a representative of the board of governors;
- discuss the leadership and management of the school with the principal;
- review the school's arrangements for safeguarding with the senior leaders;
- meet a group of children from year 6;
- engage in discussions with small groups of year 7 children about their work in mathematics and in English;
- scrutinise the school's internal performance data on the attainment and progress of the children; and
- elicit the views of 20% of the parents through the parental questionnaire and the views of 44% of the teachers and 66% of the support staff through the relevant on-line questionnaires.

The inspectors were not able to:

- assess the quality of leadership and management at all levels and in all of the key curricular areas;
- observe learning and teaching in around one half of the classes;
- observe directly the children at work in those classes or to talk to them about their work;
- evaluate fully the children's achievements and standards;

- evaluate the quality of pastoral care throughout the school; and
- evaluate the quality of the provision made for the children with special educational needs.

## **Context**

Brackenagh West Primary School was opened in 1972 and is situated in the townland of Brackenagh, near Kilkeel. The children come mainly from the town of Kilkeel and the surrounding rural area. Enrolment has increased steadily over the last four years and currently stands at 176 children. Accordingly, significant improvements to the school buildings have been made to accommodate the additional children. At the time of the inspection, the percentage of children entitled to free school meals had doubled to almost one-quarter of the enrolment; the school had identified around one-quarter of the children as requiring additional support in their learning.

## **Achievements and standards**

- The children in the classes observed are highly motivated and engage readily in the lessons. They take pride in the presentation and accuracy of their work. The children listen respectfully and co-operate maturely with one another in pairs and in small groups.
- The school's performance data shows that almost all of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make very good progress in English and mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation.
- By year 7, the most able children are secure in their understanding of the key concepts across the areas of mathematics. They demonstrate flexibility in their thinking, self correct as appropriate and apply their mathematical knowledge and understanding in a range of contexts. The most able readers in year 7 are fluent and expressive. They speak enthusiastically about their favourite authors, use appropriate strategies to work out the meanings of unfamiliar words, and demonstrate inferential understanding of theme and character.

## **Provision**

- The learning and teaching were consistently effective in the classes observed. The characteristics of the effective provision include the children's engagement in, and enjoyment of, their learning, the teachers' high expectations for both the standard of the children's achievements and behaviour, and the effective planning which underpins well-structured lessons and activities matched to the children's interests, abilities and needs.
- The strengths of the pastoral provision include: the strong sense of family that exists in the school underpinned by a distinctive caring ethos; the very positive working relationships between the staff and children; the effective links with the parents; and, the extensive range of extra-curricular activities which enriches the children's experience and develops well their interests, confidence and independence.

## **Leadership and management**

- The senior leaders have a shared vision and set a clear strategic direction for further developments in the school's provision. The school development plan (SDP) guides well the improvement work, with a clear focus on raising further the children's attainments. The school is developing well a culture of self-evaluation leading to improvement. It is appropriate that the senior leaders have identified the need for, and are establishing, a more coherent and consistent approach to monitoring and evaluation across the school.
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The recently re-constituted board of governors is developing well its role in monitoring and evaluating the school's progress against the key targets in the SDP. In order to develop further their role, it will be important for the governors to be presented with a wider range of first-hand evidence from the curricular co-ordinators.
- The school has extensive and effective links with the parents, notably to enable them to support their children's learning through, for example, the home-school book in the foundation stage, the informative website and monthly newsletters. There are regular sporting links with other local primary schools and opportunities for the respective principals to meet in clusters and share good practice.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. In discussions with the inspectors, the children reported that they felt safe and secure in school and knew what to do if they had any concerns about their well-being.

## **Conclusion**

The school's inspection is incomplete. The ETI will return as soon as possible and with little or no additional notice to complete the inspection and to issue a published report. This will include undertaking all the aspects of the inspection which were not possible during this inspection.

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