

PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Mary Queen of Peace Primary
School, Ballymena, County Antrim

Maintained, co-educational

Report of a Baseline Monitoring
Inspection (Involving Action Short of
Strike) in April 2018



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Baseline Monitoring Inspection of Mary Queen of Peace Primary School, Ballymena, County Antrim (303-6704)

Introduction

The aim of the Baseline Monitoring Inspection is to evaluate the extent to which the leadership and management uses self-evaluation effectively to inform the development planning process to bring about improvement. The outcome of the inspection will inform future inspection activity.

Mary Queen of Peace Primary School opened in September 2016 as an amalgamation of the former Glenravel Primary School and St Mary's Primary School, Cargan. The school is operating currently on the two existing sites of Glenravel and St Mary's Primary Schools; one site accommodates the provision for the children in the foundation stage, while the other accommodates provision for the children in key stages (KS) 1 and 2. A new school build is being planned which will enable all of the children to be educated together.

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, vice-principal, governors and several co-ordinators would be willing to hold discussions with the inspectors; however, no classroom observations would take place. 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.

Views of parents and staff

Twenty-five per cent of the parents and all staff responded to the confidential questionnaire issued before the inspection. The responses from the staff indicated a high level of satisfaction with the leadership and management of the amalgamation and the inclusive and pastoral ethos for all members of the new school community. The parental responses highlighted the effective support provided by the staff for the care and well-being of all the children, and the helpful, regular information they receive about their children's progress. All of the findings have been shared with the principal, vice-principal and a representative from the governors.

Focus of the inspection

The inspection focused on evaluating action to promote improvement and its impact on learning and teaching and outcomes for learners. During the inspection, lines of inquiry were selected from the development plan priorities; the school was asked to demonstrate if and how the actions taken have led to improvement for the children. The ETI met with representatives of the governors, a group of children from year 6 and the principal, vice-principal and several co-ordinators.

The lines of inquiry focused on the school's actions to:

- create a shared culture, ethos and identify which promotes the care and welfare of the school community; and
- develop the capacity of leadership at all levels to effect and sustain improvement.

Key findings

- The shared vision for improvement and the positive and productive working relationships are evident during discussions with key post-holders and in the school development plan and associated action plans. There is a clear focus on the provision of a broad curriculum to meet the interests and needs of all of the children. Relevant staff development training to build the capacity of the middle leadership is empowering the co-ordinators to lead strategically and effectively their respective areas of responsibility. The leadership and governance of the school have enabled the children, staff and parents, through the strategic plan, to play a meaningful role in the success of the amalgamation.
- The school is developing a robust, whole-school process of self-evaluation. Consultation with the children, staff and parents, and the effective use of first-hand evidence by senior leaders and co-ordinators, have been used to identify appropriate priorities for the school development plan, including the review and update of key policies and developing further the provision for numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology (ICT). The planning for progression is inconsistent and is an area for further development.
- The group of children from year 6 talked very positively about their sense of identity and belonging in the newly-formed school. They spoke enthusiastically about the benefits of the new school including opportunities for a wider friendship circle and an increased range of learning and extra-curricular activities. The children also reported that they contribute meaningfully to decision-making about matters which affect them, such as, the choice of the new school uniform.
- The ETI was unable to evaluate the quality of learning and teaching in 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. Appropriately, the staff have completed relevant risk assessments and put in place a range of procedures and actions to keep the children safe within both school sites. A member of the senior leadership team is located in each setting and monitors that the agreed procedures and actions are implemented consistently.
- The group of children from year 6 reported that they feel happy and safe in school and know what to do and who to talk to if they have a concern about their safety or well-being. They are clear about how to remain safe, including online, and are proud of belonging to a friendly, caring school. 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

At the time of the inspection, and for the lines of inquiry selected, an area for improvement has been identified. The school needs to:

- develop further the planning to ensure steady progression in the children's learning and consistently high quality learning experiences.

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. This will be reflected in future inspection activity.

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