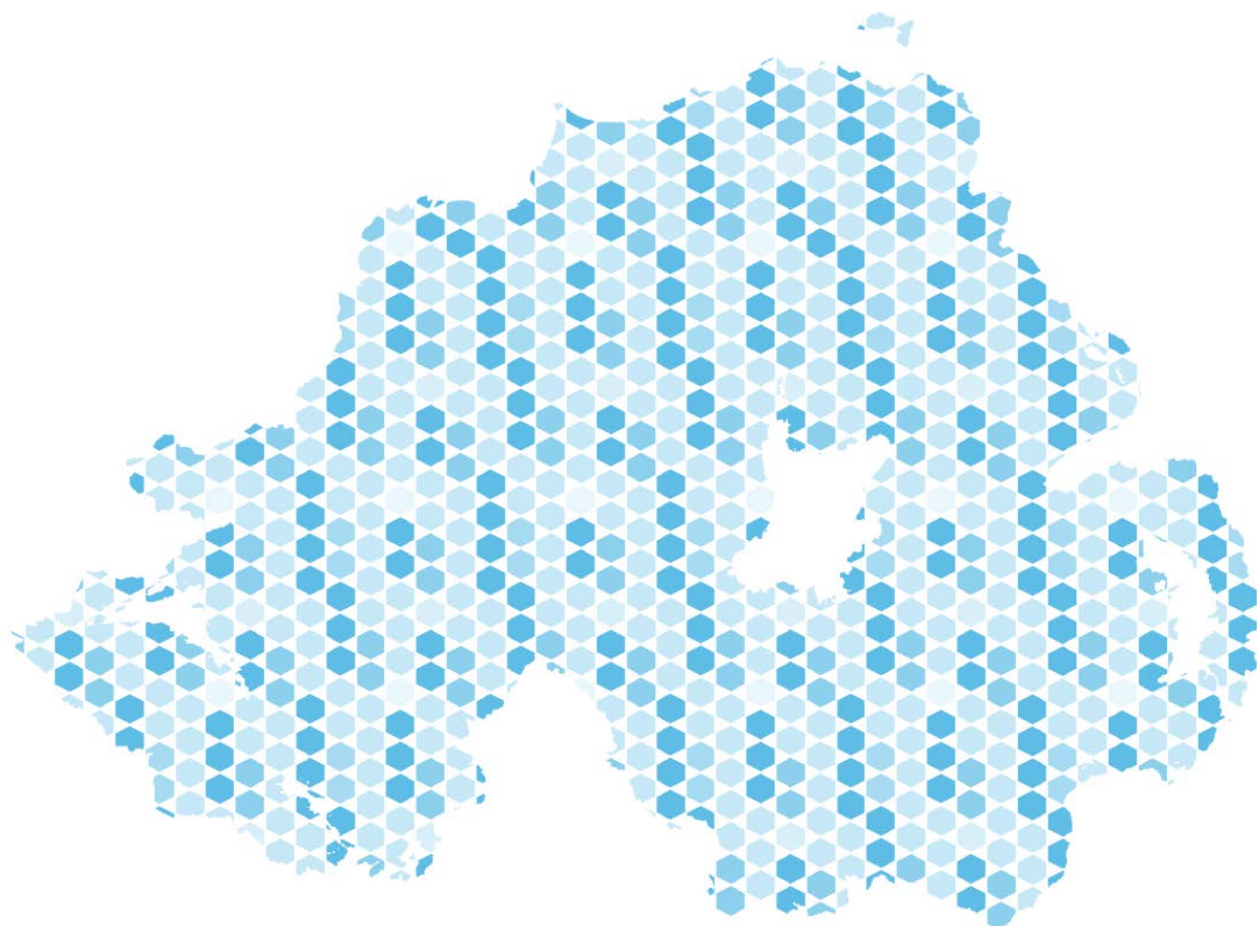


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Clare's Primary School,
Belfast

Controlled, co-educational

Report of a Follow-up Inspection
(Involving Action Short of Strike)
in December 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate
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FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF ST CLARE'S PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY UNIT, BELFAST (103-6630)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out an inspection of St Clare's Primary School and Nursery Unit in May 2016 which concluded that the school needed to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners.

The areas for improvement included the need to:

- improve the quality of the leadership at all levels of key curricular areas through the development of more robust self-evaluation practices in order to improve further the quality of the children's learning experiences and the standards they attain; and
- develop further the teachers' planning to ensure the learning needs of all of the children, including those in the nursery unit, are met fully.

The school's action plans were of a good quality and the school's development plan was adjusted in light of the inspection findings. The ETI carried out an interim follow-up visit in February 2017 and the follow-up inspection on 7 December 2017.

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 most of the teachers would not be co-operating with the inspectors. 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.

In the interval since the initial inspection, the following actions or changes which affect the work of the school have taken place:

- the number of newcomer children enrolled in the school has increased from 22 to 34 leading to a greater focus on language development for these children; and
- the School Development Service of the Education Authority has supported the school through staff development, in particular in the areas of numeracy, literacy, assessment and middle leadership.

Key findings

- The provision in the nursery unit, which was an important area for improvement at the time of the original inspection, is now good. The staff have implemented a range of improved approaches to: planning for learning; observing and recording the children's progression across each area of the curriculum; and, the provision for special educational needs, all of which are impacting positively on the learning experiences and outcomes for the children. The open-plan layout which now exists in the nursery unit creates more opportunities for the children to make independent choices, to self-manage and to develop working relationships with children across both classes. This open-plan arrangement has also impacted positively on staff working relationships and a shared ethos is now evident within the nursery unit.

- The school's action plans identify a number of appropriate strategies to address underachievement. The children's books across all year groups and the school's internal data indicate a reduction in the levels of underachievement in literacy and numeracy. In discussions with inspectors, the year 7 children have a good knowledge of all aspects of the numeracy curriculum and have flexibility in their thinking.
- There is an increased focus on the teachers' planning for learning, with improved planning and evaluation processes within and across year groups. The planning now identifies more clearly the range of teaching strategies being used, the language being developed and how the learning needs of all of the children are to be met. In numeracy, as evidenced in the planning and the children's books, there is now greater coherency and clearer opportunities for the children to make progress in their learning.
- The roles and responsibilities of senior and middle leaders, including the co-ordinators of key curricular areas, have been reviewed and enhanced to support effective self-evaluation and improvement.
- A well-planned programme of staff development is in place, aligned appropriately to the school's key priorities for improvement. All of the teachers have engaged collegially in the establishment and implementation of appropriate monitoring and evaluation practices to support teacher professional learning and improved classroom practice. More formalised opportunities for staff to share effective practice and discuss teaching strategies have been established.
- The governors have enhanced their role in the monitoring of actions to effect improvement, particularly in the area of curriculum development, through their greater engagement with middle leaders.

Owing to action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the impact of the reported actions taken and the extent to which the areas for improvement have been addressed. In particular, the ETI was unable to evaluate the quality of learning and teaching.

The areas for improvement remain as the need to:

- improve the quality of the leadership at all levels of key curricular areas through the development of more robust self-evaluation practices in order to improve further the quality of the children's learning experiences and the standards they attain; and
- develop further the teachers' planning to ensure the learning needs of all of the children, including those in the nursery unit, are met fully.

Consequently, there remains a need for St Clare's Primary School to address the important areas for improvement.

Conclusion

Owing to the impact of the action short of strike being taken by most of 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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