

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRIMARY INSPECTION



Markethill Primary School, Markethill, County Armagh

Controlled, co-educational DE ref no (501-6436)

Report of an Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in
February 2019



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

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CONTENTS

SECTION	PAGE
1. Context	1
2. Children's, parents' and staff questionnaire responses	1
3. Focus of the inspection	2
4. Overall findings of the inspection	2
5. Outcomes for learners	2
6. Quality of provision	2
7. Leadership and management	3
8. Safeguarding	3
9. Overall effectiveness	3

APPENDICES

- A. Inspection methodology and evidence base
- B. Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

INTRODUCTION

1. Context

Markethill Primary School is situated in the town of Markethill, County Armagh. The children attending the school live locally or in the surrounding rural area. The school has been consistently over-subscribed in recent years with 328 children enrolled currently. The percentage of the children entitled to free school meals and the number identified as requiring additional help with aspects of their learning have decreased over the last four years. Over the same period, the number of newcomer children has risen. A new principal and teacher were appointed in 2017 and 2018 respectively. The school has a well-established shared education partnership with a maintained primary school.

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, designated teacher and designated governor would be co-operating with the inspectors in relation to their safeguarding responsibility. The principal and governors co-operated with the inspection team, providing a wide range of relevant evidence, in relation to self-evaluation and school development planning. In addition, the inspection team met with groups of children from years six and seven. Prior to the inspection, the school informed the ETI that none of the teachers would be co-operating with the inspectors regarding the observation of classroom practice. 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.

Markethill Primary School	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Enrolment	323	324	332	328
% School attendance	97.1	96.8	96.0	96.7
% NI Primary school average	95.5	95.5	94.9	N/A
FSME Percentage ¹	28.8	27.5	21.7	20.7
No. of children on SEN register	69	64	63	55
% of children on SEN register	21.4	19.8	19.0	17
No. of children with statements of educational need	7	7	8	14
No. of newcomer children	8	11	15	17

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

N/A not available

2. Children's, parents' and staff questionnaire responses

A small number of parents and almost all of the staff responded to the online, confidential questionnaires. The responses to the parental questionnaire were very positive and the written comments indicated high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the life and work of the school, including the effective leadership and supportive, child-centred ethos. The responses to the staff questionnaire endorsed the effective working relationships within the school and the positive impact of the improvement work to date. The responses to the year 7 online children's questionnaire indicated their appreciation of the staff's support and guidance and their enjoyment of various learning activities both in and out of school. The ETI has communicated to the principal and representatives of the board of governors the main findings from the questionnaires.

¹ The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of children entitled to free school meals.

3. Focus of the inspection

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully the:

- outcomes for children with a particular focus on literacy and numeracy;
- quality of provision with a particular focus on literacy and numeracy including across the curriculum; and
- quality of leadership and management.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Unable to assure the quality of education
Outcomes for learners	No performance level available
Quality of provision	No performance level available
Leadership and management	No performance level available

KEY FINDINGS

5. Outcomes for learners

- The inspectors met with a group of children from year seven who reported that they appreciate the regular opportunities to develop their independent reading and that they enjoy reading in relation to other areas of their learning including the World Around Us. The children read confidently and fluently. Another group of children used appropriate mental mathematics strategies accurately and knew how to check their answers; they also enjoyed sharing and explaining their mathematical thinking.
- The inspectors met informally with children from a range of classes; all were polite, welcoming and keen to share aspects of their positive experiences in school.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the learning outcomes for the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning;
- progression in the children's learning; and
- the children's wider skills and dispositions.

6. Quality of provision

- The inspectors met with a group of year six children who spoke very positively about their learning experiences, the range of sports and clubs they are offered and their opportunities to develop leadership skills. The children reported that they enjoy the ongoing shared education activities made available to them.
- The school identifies appropriately, at an early stage, the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning and responds with tailored programmes to meet their individual needs. For example, the inspectors observed the positive impact of the sensory motor programme for identified children in all key stages; as a result, the children are developing well their physical, social and personal skills and confidence.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the quality of the curriculum;
- the effectiveness of the guidance and support in bringing about high quality individual learning experiences;
- the effectiveness and impact of planning, teaching, learning and assessment in promoting successful learning; and
- care and welfare.

7. Leadership and management

- Senior leadership, supported by co-ordinators, has led important improvement work in key areas such as planning and the effective use of assessment data. The school development plan is comprehensive and based on wide-ranging consultation with the staff, parents and children; it is informed well by the school's self-evaluation processes. The action plans reflect the school's current priorities in learning and teaching.
- The governors bring a variety of relevant and complementary skills to their work, they are well informed about the strengths and challenges and place a clear focus on the children's well-being and development. The governors discussed their confidence in the school leadership and in the direction of the school's improvement work.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the effectiveness of strategic leadership and governance;
- the effectiveness and impact of middle leadership; and
- the effectiveness of action to promote and sustain improvement.

8. Safeguarding

- During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education. In discussions with the inspectors, a group of year six children reported that they feel very safe and happy in school and know what to do and who to talk to if they have any concerns about their safety and well-being. The children could explain clearly the role of the school safeguarding team. 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.

9. Overall effectiveness

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. This will be reflected in future inspection activity.

Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the ETI website: [The Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework \(ISEF\): Effective Practice and Self-Evaluation Questions for Primary | Education Training Inspectorate](#)

Inspectors observe learning and teaching, scrutinise documentation and the children's written work and hold formal and informal discussions with children, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for inspection include:

- a meeting with a representative from the governors;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- the opportunity for the children, parents, teaching and support staff to complete an online, confidential questionnaire.

Where, owing to the action short of strike, this evidence base was not available, it has been referenced in the body of the inspection report.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with five governors, including the designated safeguarding governor;
- meetings with the principal and the designated teacher for safeguarding;
- a review of the school development plan and associated documentation;
- a review of planning documentation and evaluations;
- access to samples of the children's written work across the key stages;
- a review of safeguarding and associated pastoral care documentation; and
- meetings with groups of year 6 and year 7 children.

Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

Quantitative terms

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75% - 90%
A majority	-	50% - 74%
A significant minority	-	30% - 49%
A minority	-	10% - 29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

Performance levels

The ETI use the following performance levels when reporting on outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management²:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on governance:

High degree of confidence
Confidence
Limited confidence

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on safeguarding:

Reflects the guidance
Reflects broadly the guidance
Unsatisfactory

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on care and welfare:

Impacts positively on learning, teaching and outcomes for learners.
Does not impact positively enough on learning, teaching and outcomes for learners.

² And the overall provision in a unit, as applicable.

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the school:

The school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection in 12 to 18 months.
The school needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection in 18 to 24 months.

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