

Education and Training Inspectorate PRIMARY INSPECTION



St Brigid's Primary School, Downpatrick, County Down

Maintained, co-educational DE Ref No: 403-3040

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



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

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INTRODUCTION

1. Context

St Brigid's Primary School is situated in the town of Downpatrick. All of the children attending the school come from the local parish and surrounding area. The enrolment has remained steady over the past four years. There has been an increase in the number of children attending the school who have English as an additional language. A new senior leader was appointed in September 2018. The school is involved in a shared education partnership with a controlled primary school.

The trade unions which make up the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) have declared industrial action primarily in relation to a pay dispute, and also workload and other management issues. The industrial action includes non-co-operation with the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). Prior to the inspection, the school informed the ETI that none of the teachers would be co-operating with the inspection. The senior and middle leadership and governors co-operated with the inspection in relation to safeguarding responsibilities, co-ordinating roles and the school development planning process. The ETI has a statutory duty to monitor, inspect and report on the standards of education and professional practice among teachers 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.

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

Ten percent of the parents responded to the confidential, online questionnaire. The responses to the parental questionnaire were positive and the written comments praised the work of the teachers in the changes they are making to challenge the children more in their work and in providing leadership opportunities for the children to gain new skills. All of the parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that they are happy with their child's experiences at the school. None of the teachers completed the online questionnaire.

Almost all of the year 7 children responded to the online questionnaire. In their responses, the children highlighted their enthusiasm for school plays, swimming, opportunities to meet and learn with children from other schools and how to stay safe online. The ETI has communicated to the principal and the chair of the board of governors the main findings, and any issues, from the questionnaires.

3. Focus of the inspection

The ETI was unable to evaluate:

- outcomes for children with a particular focus on numeracy and literacy;
- quality of provision with a particular focus on numeracy and literacy 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 ETI was unable to evaluate:

- 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 children from year 6, who met with the inspectors, explained how they enjoyed learning in general, and, in particular, activities and projects in information and communication technology and the World Around Us. They explained, with mature insight, how feedback from their teachers helps them improve the quality of their work. The children enjoy their shared learning experiences, for example, plugged and unplugged coding activities, with their peers within the shared education partnership. They contribute actively to improve the provision within school and the school environment through, for example, the eco- and school- councils and 'digital leaders' and are clear about their roles and responsibilities.

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 has a clear vision for the future development of the school. This is reflected in a well-constructed school development plan which is underpinned by meaningful consultation with a range of relevant stakeholders, including the children and parents. The curricular action plans have agreed targets and cycles of evaluation which align with whole school priorities. There is evidence of evaluation informed by first-hand evidence, for example, collegiate planning. Middle leadership is developing in their role in using the range of qualitative and quantitative data available to evaluate the impact of their work on the children's learning and progress.

- The governors are highly informed about the life and work of the school. Link governors are kept updated on the school improvement process through regular contact with learning co-ordinators. The governors have a good range of complementary skills and offer effective challenge and support to the principal, as appropriate.

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. The children from year 6, with whom the inspectors met, reported that they feel safe in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or welfare. 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 a confidential, online 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 the principal and a governor in relation to school development planning;
- scrutiny of all safeguarding and child protection documentation;
- a meeting with the principal and acting designated teacher for child protection in relation to safeguarding;
- review of other school documentation;
- meetings with both literacy co-ordinators, the numeracy co-ordinator and the assessment co-ordinator;
- brief visits to each classroom; and
- a discussion with a group of eight year 6 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 management¹:

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.

¹ 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:

<p>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.</p>
<p>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.</p>
<p>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.</p>
<p>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.</p>

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