

Education and Training Inspectorate PRIMARY INSPECTION



St Francis' Primary School, Castlewellan, County Down

Maintained, co-educational DE Ref No: 403-1531

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



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

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INTRODUCTION

1. Context

St Francis' Primary school is located in the hamlet of Drumaroad, approximately six miles outside Castlewellan. All of the children attending the school come from the local area. The enrolment has remained steady over the last four years. The school participates in a shared education partnership with a neighbouring controlled 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 none of the teachers would be co-operating with the inspection in terms of classroom observations. The senior and middle leadership co-operated with the inspection team in relation to their leadership and safeguarding responsibilities. 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.

| St Francis' Primary School | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Enrolment | 94 | 92 | 96 | N/A |
| % School attendance | 96.8 | 96.7 | N/A | N/A |
| % NI Primary school average | 95.5 | 94.9 | N/A | N/A |
| FSME Percentage ¹ | 26.6 | 20.7 | 21.9 | N/A |
| No. of children on SEN register | 29 | 27 | 24 | N/A |
| % of children on SEN register | 30.9 | 29.3 | 25.0 | N/A |
| No. of children with statements of educational need | 6 | 7 | 6 | N/A |

Source: data as held by the school.
N/A not available

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

As a result of the action short of strike, the school did not distribute the confidential, online questionnaire information to year 7 children, parents or staff. Therefore, it is not possible to report on their views.

3. Focus of the inspection

The ETI was unable to evaluate:

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

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

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 group of year 6 and year 7 children who met with inspectors were friendly and welcoming. They engage easily with their peers and with visitors to the school. The children explain clearly their views on school life and how the teachers help them to enjoy their learning.

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 group of children who met with the inspectors spoke positively about the range of extra-curricular activities offered by the school including karate and football. The children develop leadership skills through, for example, membership of the school council, the digital leaders' team and the eco-club. There are many opportunities to celebrate the children's successes and their talents and the children feel that the positive behaviour system is fair and motivates them to do their best.
- The numeracy and literacy curricula are enhanced and supplemented by a variety of resources and computerised programmes and the children report that the additional software packages have improved their learning experiences.
- The Friends of St Francis' parent association is very supportive of the school and has funded the extension of the children's playground and information and communication technology (ICT) resources.

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

- The leadership and staff of the school work highly effectively in the best interests of the children. The role of middle leadership is developing and the co-ordinators are becoming increasingly more effective at robust self-evaluation using the range of qualitative and quantitative data available. Communication with parents and the wider community is extensive and contributes well to the leadership's reflective practice.
- The school is entering into a new cycle of school development planning which is underpinned by meaningful consultation with a range of relevant stakeholders, including the children and parents. The curricular action plans align closely to the whole school priorities and there is evidence of evaluation informed by first-hand evidence such as, peer observations and collegiate planning.
- The governors are highly informed about the life and work of the school. They have a good range of complementary skills and offer effective challenge and support to the principal as appropriate. The governors are updated regularly on the improvement work of the school and are establishing links with key co-ordinators.
- It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget in order to address the current and future needs of the children and the staff.

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 report that they feel safe in the school and that they are aware of 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.

The school needs to:

- update the positive behaviour policy to reflect better the practice of 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 representatives of 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:

- meetings with the principal;
- a meeting with the principal and the designated teacher;
- a meeting with the literacy co-ordinator and the numeracy co-ordinator;
- a meeting with representatives of the governors; and
- a meeting with a group of the 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 impacts 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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