

PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Joseph and St James's Primary
School, Poyntzpass, County Armagh

Maintained, co-educational

Report of an Inspection (Involving
Action Short of Strike)
in May 2018

eti

The Education and Training Inspectorate
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INTRODUCTION

1. Context

St Joseph and St James's Primary School is a co-educational maintained primary school situated in Poyntzpass. Most of the children attending the school come from the village and the surrounding rural area. The enrolment has remained stable and the school is regularly over-subscribed. The percentage of children entitled to free school meals has decreased significantly, to just over 12% of the enrolment, in the past four years. The school participates in the Shared Education signature project 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 all of the teachers would not be co-operating regarding lesson observations 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.

St Joseph and St James's Primary School, Poyntzpass	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Enrolment	127	139	137	132
% Attendance	96.6	96.0	96.9	N/A
% NI Primary School Average	95.4	95.5	95.5	N/A
Percentage of children entitled to Free School Meals (FSM)	23.6	20.1	18.2	12.8
No. of children on SEN register	24	26	17	25
% of children on SEN register	18.9	18.7	12.4	18.9
No. of children with statements of educational needs	3	2	2	2
No. of newcomers	1	1	2	2

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

N/A not available

2. Views of children, parents and staff

Thirty percent of parents and 85% of the staff responded to the confidential, online questionnaires. Most of the responses to the parental questionnaire were positive. In their written comments, the parents highlighted the children's enjoyment of their learning and of the extra-curricular activities available to them. The responses to the staff questionnaire endorsed the mutual support within the staff team, and the close links between the school, the parents and the local community. All of the children in year 7 completed the confidential, online questionnaire and almost all of their responses were positive. In their written comments, the children expressed their appreciation of the support provided by the teachers and of the friends they had made among their peers. The ETI has communicated to the principal and the chair of the board of governors the main findings from the questionnaires, including a small number of concerns about certain aspects of communication between the school and home.

3. Focus of the inspection

The ETI was unable to evaluate:

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

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Unable to assure of 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 school's internal performance data indicates that almost all of the children, including those who require additional support in their learning, achieve as expected or above in English; a majority of the children attain standards as expected and above in mathematics. The school has appropriately identified, as a priority, the need to raise further the standards attained by the children in mathematics.
- A sample group of children from year 7 spoke with enthusiasm and maturity about their favourite authors and reading across a range of genres. They read fluently and confidently, with evident understanding, and used various strategies to work out the meanings of unfamiliar words.

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 sample group of children from key stage 2 spoke positively about their learning, in particular, their enjoyment of developing new skills and the support provided by the staff. They also expressed their appreciation of the fair and welcoming ethos in the school.
- The children develop their leadership skills through: taking on head boy, head girl and deputy roles; volunteering to act as prefects, class mentors and peer readers; and membership of the School Council.

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

- Following a period of change, the senior leadership and co-ordinator roles have stabilised. The senior leaders have established a supportive collegial ethos in which the co-ordinators are empowered to carry out their respective responsibilities. The school has forged good links with the local community through the parent-teacher association and, notably, the Shared Education programme with a local controlled primary school. This initiative has facilitated joint meetings of, and training for, the boards of governors, shared events for the children and their families, and support from the Poyntzpass Historical Society.
- The school development plan is informed by ongoing consultation with the children, parents, staff and governors. While it articulates clearly the priorities for school improvement, the evaluations are not supported well enough by evidence. Through focus groups, the children's views on their learning are harnessed effectively to inform the action-planning process, notably in literacy and numeracy. In their action plans, the senior leaders and co-ordinators articulate clearly the actions required to bring about improvements in provision and standards. However, the targets are not sufficiently specific; as a result, it is difficult to measure progress and the impact of the planned actions.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, the ETI evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are highly supportive of the work of the school. They are well informed about the provision and the standards attained by the children, for example, through hearing at first-hand from the co-ordinators, and provide challenge when 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. In discussions with the inspectors, the children reported that they felt safe in school and knew what to do if they had any concerns about their well-being. 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.

Health and safety

1. There is uncontrolled access by the back door to the main school building.

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 from the governors;
- meetings with senior leaders and curricular co-ordinators;
- 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.

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

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.

¹ And the overall provision in a unit, as applicable.

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