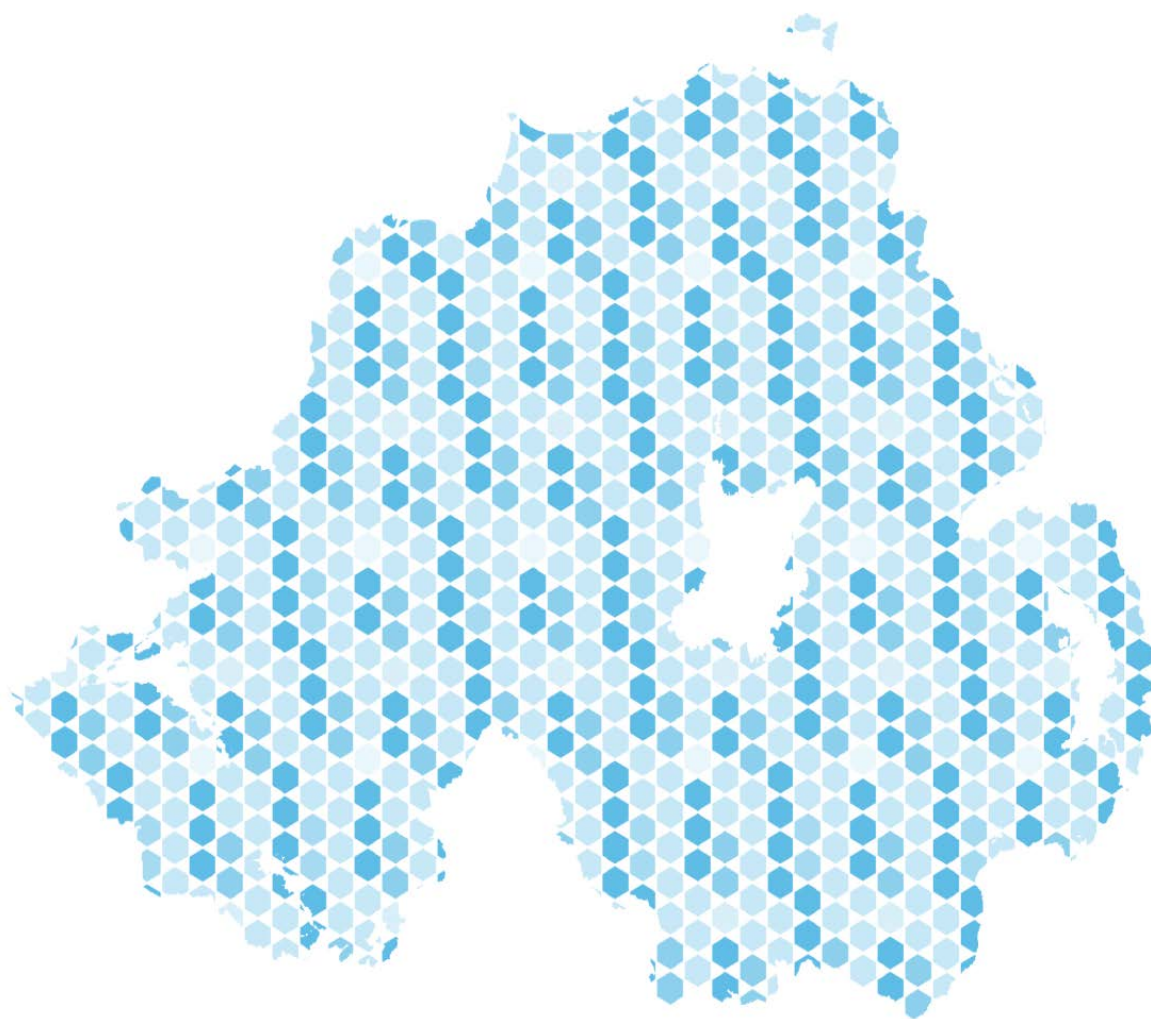Education and Training Inspectorate

St Michael's Primary School, Newtownhamilton, County Down

Maintained, co-educational

Report of an Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in May 2017

eti

The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

CSE

CONTENTS

Section   **Page**

Appendices

INTRODUCTION

1.   Context

St Michael's Primary School is a maintained, co-educational primary school situated in rural Newtownhamilton, County Armagh. Almost all of the children come from the local and surrounding rural area. Enrolment has risen steadily over the last four years. At the time of the inspection, approximately 45% of the children were entitled to free school meals and 13% of the children were identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning. A new principal was appointed in December 2016. In addition to the teaching principal, there are two full-time teachers and a principal release teacher.

Four of the teaching unions which make up the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council have declared industrial action primarily in relation to a pay dispute. This includes non-co-operation with ETI. Prior to the inspection, the school informed the ETI that almost all of the staff 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 limited evaluations are based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection.

St Michaels' Primary School	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Enrolment	53	58	64	76
% School attendance	95.1	94.7	94.4	N/A
% NI Primary school average	95.6	95.4	95.5	N/A
FSME Percentage[1]	39.6	43	43.8	45
No. of children on SEN register	7	9	10	13
% of children on SEN register	14	18.9	15.6	16.4
No. of children with statements of educational need	*	*	*	*
No. of newcomer children	17	16	11	19

Source: data as held by the school.
* fewer than 5
 N/A not available

2.   Views of parents and staff

Thirteen percent of the parents and almost all of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaires. Nearly all of the parental replies were positive and highlighted that the children enjoy learning at school and are supported well by staff in their learning. Additional written comments highlighted that the children are happy and feel valued at school, and they commended the care and dignity shown to the children by all of the staff. The teachers' responses were wholly positive and outlined the welcoming, caring and inclusive ethos, and how the staff worked well as a team to develop the children's enjoyment of learning. Almost all of the support staff responses were positive and highlighted that the staff work well together to help all children overcome barriers to their learning. The ETI has reported to the principal and representatives of the board of governors the main findings and written comments emerging from the parental, teaching and support staff confidential questionnaires.

---

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

3.   Focus of the inspection

The ETI were unable to evaluate:

- outcomes for children with a particular focus on literacy, including across the curriculum and how the school is addressing low attainment and underachievement where applicable;

- quality of provision; and

- quality of leadership and management.

Where it has been possible to evaluate aspects of the foci, they are reported below.

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

- A group of children from year seven spoke with inspectors about reading. They reported that they enjoy reading and talked about their favourite authors. The children demonstrated a very good understanding of text, characters and plot. They discussed how their reading had influenced them to complete a project on homelessness.

- The inspectors met with three groups of children. They were confident, engaging and eager to contribute to the discussions. The children talked about the opportunities provided to them to develop their wider skills, for example, through participation in the student council and taking on the role of prefect.

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 ETI was unable to evaluate:

- 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

- Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are very well informed about all aspects of school life, are fully committed to their roles and are proactive in bringing about school improvement. Importantly, the chairperson presents a monthly report to the governors detailing his ongoing work with the school and the progress made on the improvement agenda.

- In the short time that the principal has been in post, he has completed a thorough baseline review of the school development plan in consultation with governors, parents and children. Strategic action plans for a range of priorities including information and communication technology (ICT) and special educational needs have been developed. The monitoring and evaluating processes have been identified appropriately by the principal as an area for further improvement. The co-ordinators have begun to review action plans to evaluate the impact of specific targets on the children's outcomes; this is at an early stage of development.

- 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.

- During the inspection, the school provided evidence that satisfactory arrangements for safeguarding reflect broadly the guidance issued by the relevant Departments. Work on the following aspects is underway and needs to be completed:

    - review further the policies to reflect the school's procedures, in particular, the positive behaviour management and anti-bullying policies.

- In discussion with the inspectors, a group of children from year 6 reported that they feel happy, safe and secure in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their wellbeing. 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 ETI was unable to evaluate fully the impact and effectiveness of:

- the strategic leadership;

- the middle leadership; and

- action to promote and sustain improvement.

8.   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 / Accommodation

While the principal and staff are active in monitoring the access arrangements to the school, the following matters need to be addressed as a matter of urgency:

1. the rear perimeter fence of the school is in very poor condition with visible gaps, bull wires protruding and evidence of damage. The fence is not fit for purpose;

2. to the rear of the site and beside the key stage (KS) 1 mobile classrooms, there is a low side gate which leads to a laneway that is accessible from the main road;

3. the mobile classrooms and rear side doors do not have secured access; and

4. the school railings are rusting.

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

In order to conduct a primary inspection, 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.

These arrangements include:

- meetings with the principal and teachers with specific responsibilities on the pre-inspection visit;

- a meeting with representatives from the governors;

- meetings with groups of children; and

- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a 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.

Inspectors scrutinised a limited range of documentation and samples of the children's work in literacy, numeracy and ICT.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with a representative from the governors; and

- meetings with groups of 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 management[1]:

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.
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.

---

[1] And the overall provision in a subject area or unit, as applicable.