

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRIMARY INSPECTION



St Oliver Plunkett's Primary School, Ballyhegan, County Armagh

Maintained, co-educational DE Ref No (503-6180)

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



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

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INTRODUCTION

1. Context

St Oliver Plunkett's Primary School is situated in the townland of Ballyhegan, between Armagh City and Portadown. All of the children attending the school come from the surrounding rural area. The percentage of children entitled to free school meals has reduced over the past four years. The proportion requiring additional help with aspects of their learning has remained steady over the same period. The principal took up post in September 2017. The school is involved 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 the teachers would not be co-operating with the inspectors in respect of classroom observations. However, all of the teachers met with inspectors to discuss their leadership roles. 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 Oliver Plunkett's Primary School	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Enrolment	112	107	114	118
% School attendance	97.3	97.3	98.1	N/A
% NI Primary school average	95.5	95.5	N/A	N/A
FSME Percentage ¹	22.3	16.8	14.0	16.1
No. of children on SEN register	14	10	15	15
% of children on SEN register	12.5	9.3	13.2	12.7
No. of children with statements of educational need	*	*	*	*
No. of newcomer children	6	6	7	6

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

N/A not available

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

Thirty-seven percent of the parents and almost all of the staff responded to the online, confidential questionnaires. The responses to the parental questionnaire were very positive; in the written comments, the parents praised the community ethos and the work of the staff, highlighting the knowledge the staff have of each child. The parents also expressed their overall satisfaction with the progress made by their children. The teachers affirmed the supportive working relationships with the children and the positive, inclusive learning environment.

All of the year 7 children responded to the online questionnaire. In their responses, the children highlighted their enthusiasm for a range of sports and the shared education learning experiences. They expressed their appreciation of improvements to the playground and their caring and helpful teachers who make learning fun.

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

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 the:

- outcomes for children with a particular focus on numeracy;
- quality of provision with a particular focus on 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 children who met with the inspections during discussions and visits to the classrooms were welcoming and friendly. They were keen to discuss and share their learning and spoke with pride about their many achievements.
- A group of year 7 children discussed articulately and with great enthusiasm the range of mathematical strategies they use to solve and pose problems. They are very aware of the relevance of mathematics in other areas of learning and in real-life situations, including a wide range of careers. They report that they enjoy investigative activities and being challenged to explore all the strategies that may be required to find the answers to more difficult questions.
- The children's numeracy books provide evidence of the breadth and balance of the curriculum across the school; the children's work is well-organised and neatly presented.

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

- There is a tightly focused, flexible and well-resourced range of interventions in place for children who require additional numeracy support, such as short duration 'booster' sessions. The school's evidence indicates that almost all of the children build their confidence and improve their numeracy skills following intervention. The effective overview of the provision for children who require additional support with their learning is informed by careful analysis of individual learning needs. Regular and adept monitoring of each child's progress is an important feature of the work.
- All of the year 6 and 7 children who met with inspectors talked positively about their learning across the curriculum, including the shared learning experiences with their peers within the shared education partnership. They reflected maturely on how they contribute to the life of the school and develop a range of skills through taking on different leadership roles and responsibilities. The children report that they are listened to and their views are valued. They spoke with pride about their work and many achievements as, for example, members of the Eco- and School councils, 'digital leaders,' 'play pals' and 'anti-bullying superheroes.' The children articulated the important role they play in ensuring their school is welcoming, respectful to others and fun for everyone.
- Elements of connected learning are evident in the numerous attractive displays of the children's work in the corridors and classrooms.

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

- Meaningful engagement with all members of the school community is an integral feature of the school development planning (SDP) process; the children's input is a particular strength. Effective partnerships among the parish, sports and cultural organisations and the school support well the children's learning and development and have led to important improvements in the school's environment.
- The actions plans within the current SDP identify appropriate priorities within the areas for learning which are informed by the thorough analysis of data and teachers' evaluations of the children's progress. There is a consistent approach to action planning across the school which includes regular monitoring of the school's progress in meeting the targets through collaborative evaluation of first-hand evidence. As they begin the next cycle of improvement planning, the senior leadership team (SLT) has begun to define appropriately the areas for development in the new SDP.

- The governors bring a wide range of experience and expertise to their roles. They value the systematic manner in which the senior leadership team (SLT) organises evidence of improvement and areas for development to help them evaluate the pace of the children's progress. The governors who met with inspectors expressed their support for the school and the important focus placed on developing the children's wider skills and dispositions. They reported that there is a clear partnership between the staff and the children and that the children benefit from opportunities to take on meaningful leadership roles and develop skills through working in collaboration towards common goals.

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. They feel safe and know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety and 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 and safeguarding 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 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:

- meetings with the principal, including in the role of the representative;
- a meeting with representatives of the board of governors;
- a meeting with the special educational needs co-ordinator;
- a meeting with a support teacher;
- a meeting the numeracy co-ordinator, literacy co-ordinator and World Around Us co-ordinator;
- meetings with groups of year 6 and 7 children; and
- visits to all classes including engagement with 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 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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