

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRIMARY INSPECTION



Blythefield Primary School, Belfast

Controlled, co-educational DE Ref No: 101-6207

Report of a Sustaining Improvement Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in February 2020



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

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Introduction

The previous inspection in February 2017 evaluated the overall effectiveness of Blythefield Primary School as having the capacity to identify and bring about improvement. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 27 February 2020.

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, senior leadership and governors would be co-operating with the inspection. 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.

Focus of the inspection

Owing to the school's participation in industrial action:

- the inspection was unable to focus on evaluating the extent to which the school is capable of demonstrating its capacity to effect improvement through self-evaluation and effective school planning; and
- a line of inquiry was not selected by the school from the development plan priorities.

Safeguarding

During the inspection, the school did not provide evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect or reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education.¹

Owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the arrangements, including the outworking thereof, for safeguarding in the school.

Conclusion

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. The school is a high priority for future inspection with no further notice.

The ETI will return to the school within six weeks to evaluate and report on the arrangements for safeguarding.

¹ The Department of Education will seek assurance from the Education Authority that they are working with the school in relation to the inspection report.

ADDENDUM TO THE REPORT ON THE INSPECTION OF BLYTHEFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL IN FEBRUARY 2020

SAFEGUARDING

In line with the child protection/safeguarding procedures of the Education and Training Inspectorate, the ETI evaluated Blythefield Primary School on 5 May 2020 as a follow-up to the inspection which took place on 27 February 2020. The purpose was to afford the school a further opportunity to provide evidence on its arrangements for safeguarding; owing to action short of strike at the time of the inspection, the school did not provide evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding reflect or reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education.

Owing to the closure of the school, in-line with Covid 19 guidance, the ETI spoke with the chair of governors by telephone to obtain the required assurances about the safeguarding procedures within the school. On the basis of the evidence available, the arrangements for safeguarding reflect broadly the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

Owing to the previous action short of strike and the subsequent closure of the school, in line with Covid 19 guidance, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the outworking of the arrangements for safeguarding in the school.

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