

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRIMARY INSPECTION



Orritor Primary School and Nursery Unit, Cookstown, County Tyrone

Controlled, co-educational DE Ref No (501-6221)

Report of a Sustaining Improvement Inspection (Involving Action
Short of Strike) in June 2019



The Education and Training Inspectorate
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Sustaining Improvement Inspection of Orritor Primary School and Nursery Unit, Cookstown, County Tyrone (501-6221)

Introduction

The previous inspection in May 2016 evaluated the overall effectiveness of Orritor Primary School and Nursery Unit as having the capacity to identify and bring about improvement. In the interim, the enrolment has increased to 210 children and the school is now in a shared education partnership with a local maintained school. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 3 June 2019.

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 inspectors. The senior leadership co-operated with the inspection in relation to safeguarding and leadership 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.

Focus of the inspection

The inspection focused on evaluating the extent to which the school is capable of demonstrating its capacity to effect improvement through self-evaluation and effective school planning. The school also provided evidence of provision for safeguarding as part of the inspection.

The line of inquiry during the SII was:

- numeracy, with a particular focus on problem-solving.

Key findings

- The action plans for numeracy focus clearly on improving further the learning experiences provided for the children, with a whole-school emphasis on open-ended, investigative activities to develop the children's thinking and mathematical language. This year, problem-solving has been the focus of the shared education work; a group of year 6 children reported that they enjoyed the numeracy activities with their friends from the partner school in a range of different settings. The numeracy provision in the nursery unit has been enhanced by the outdoor 'mathematics centre,' a resource that makes creative use of natural materials and seasonal items. The children in the nursery unit were keen to share and discuss their learning and engaged well with a wide range of resources.

- A group of year seven children discussed confidently how they completed their 'Titanic Investigation.' They reflected maturely on the planning and organisation of the task, their choice of resources, including the use of the outdoor learning environment, and the importance of teamwork when problem-solving. The children articulated how they could apply their mathematical learning from this particular task to other situations.
- The year six children spoke positively about their learning across the curriculum. They expressed their appreciation of a wide range of extra-curricular and after-school activities. The children explained how, as 'buddies' they and their peers support others, and how they contribute to aspects of decision-making through the Eco-Council.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the line of inquiry; and
- the quality of learning and teaching within the classrooms.

Safeguarding

During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education. The year six children reported that they are happy and safe at school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or 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.

Conclusion

Owing to the impact of the action short of strike being taken by the teachers, 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.

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