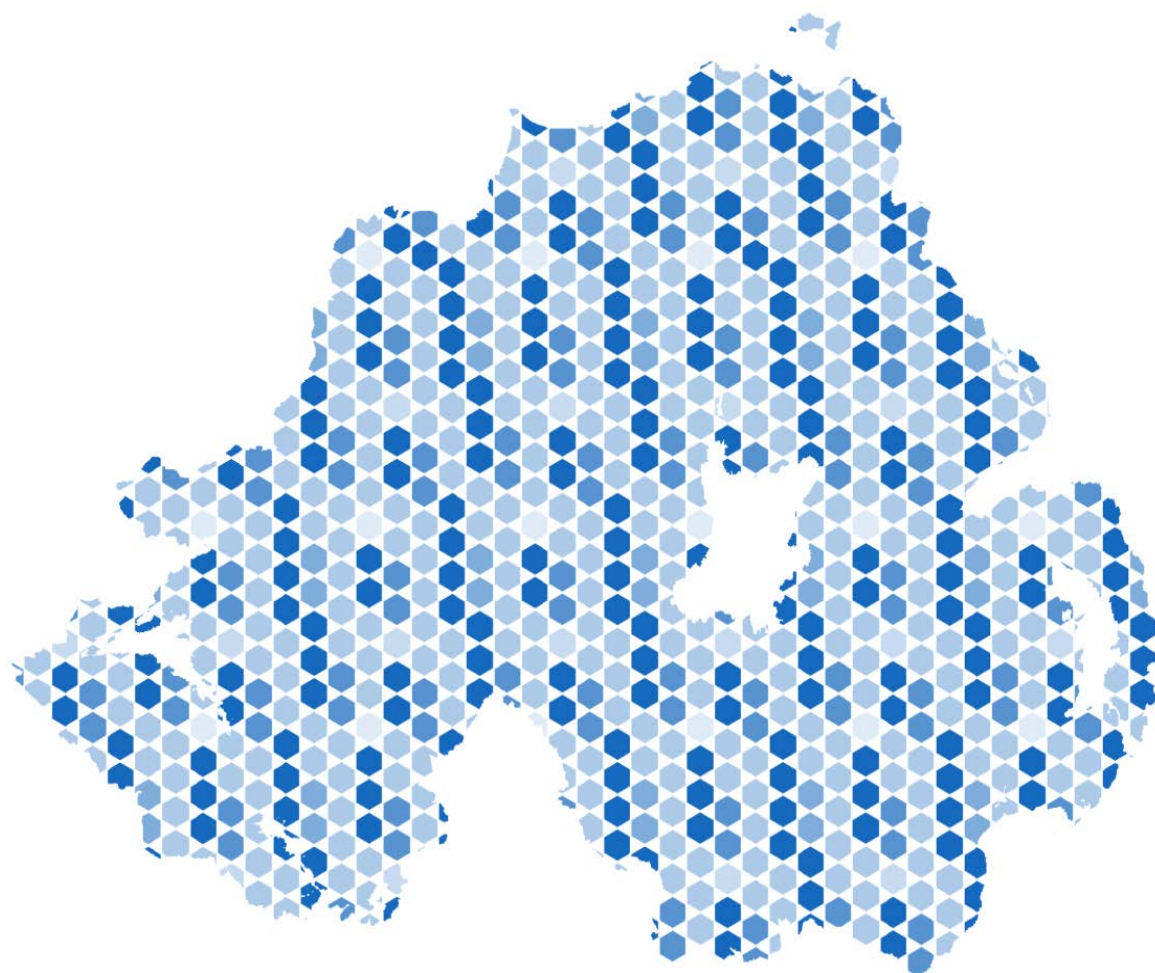


# SPECIAL SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Riverside School, Antrim

Report of a Sustaining Improvement  
Inspection (Involving Action Short of  
Strike) in May 2018



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## **Sustaining Improvement Inspection of Riverside School, Newtownabbey, County Antrim (331-6609)**

### **Introduction**

The previous inspection in January 2015 evaluated the overall effectiveness of Riverside School as good<sup>1</sup>. In the interim a temporary acting vice-principal has recently been appointed and two teachers have joined the senior leadership team. Nursery provision has been established and approximately two thirds of the teaching staff are new teachers to the school. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 30 May 2018.

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 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 areas of focus during the SII were to:

- ensure that action plans are implemented and the outcomes rigorously monitored and reviewed continuously; and
- improve the provision and opportunities for outdoor learning across the school.

### **Key findings**

- The school development plan and associated action plans are in place and have been presented to the Board of Governors by the co-ordinators. Importantly the action plans inform training needs and staff development. A monitoring and evaluating policy has been devised and there is an increased focus on the monitoring and evaluating processes across the school. Clear roles and responsibilities have been established for the curricular and pastoral co-ordinators which include the monitoring and evaluation of planners, teaching, individual education plans (IEPs), pupil work and disseminating identified effective practice at departmental meetings. The senior leadership have undertaken agreed 'learning walks' to inform the quality of learning and teaching at senior leadership level. Importantly, the school has participated in an online pilot assessment programme in order to track more robustly pupil progression and outcomes. The senior leadership have identified the need to quality assure further the consistency of the monitoring and evaluating processes to measure more effectively the impact of identified actions on school improvement and pupil outcomes.

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<sup>1</sup> From September 2015, the overall effectiveness of a school previously evaluated as outstanding or very good has been reported as a school demonstrating a high level of capacity for sustained improvement

- Parents and the local community have supported generously a fund-raising initiative to develop the outdoor learning resources in the school. Consequently, a range of resources which develop play, learning and the sensory needs of the pupils across the school have been purchased and include outdoor swings and cabins, trampolines and bicycles. In the nursery, foundation stage and key stage 1, outdoor learning experiences are planned within the schemes of work. It will be important to disseminate this planning with the key stage 2 teachers to ensure progression in learning; and to track more robustly the development of the pupils' experiences, confidence and skills. Within the senior school, pupils have planted trees and are helping staff to redesign and develop the sensory and butterfly gardens. An outdoor learning inclusion group has been established and all pupils are timetabled for an afternoon of enjoyable outdoor learning experiences. Importantly, associated risk assessments have been completed and are used to inform the planning for learning and teaching. The senior leadership team has identified that further development of staff is required to ensure that high quality outdoor learning experiences are identified and a consistent approach to effective planning is evident.

The ETI were unable to evaluate fully:

- the areas of focus; and
- the quality of learning and teaching within the classrooms.

### **Safeguarding**

During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding pupils reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education. 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 school needs to:

- continue their review of the pastoral policies to include positive behaviour management and anti-bullying; and
- develop the educational visits risk assessments to ensure that specific risk management strategies are in place.

### **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 provided for the pupils. This will be reflected in future inspection activity.

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