

# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Brigid's Primary School,  
Ballymena, County Antrim

Maintained, co-educational

Report of a Sustaining Improvement  
Inspection (Involving Action Short of  
Strike) in September 2017



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## **Sustaining Improvement Inspection of St Brigid's Primary School, Ballymena, County Antrim (303-6679)**

### **Introduction**

The original inspection in May 2011, evaluated the overall effectiveness of St Brigid's Primary School as very good<sup>1</sup>. The school took part in the pilot of the sustaining improvement inspection (SII). A second SII was conducted on 18 September 2017.

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 almost all of the teachers 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 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 development planning. The ETI met with the principal, vice-principal and chairperson of the board of governors and two groups of children from year six and seven. The principal provided a substantial range of information and documentation in relation to school improvement and safeguarding. The school also provided samples of the children written work from the three key stages.

The lines of inquiry during the SII were:

- the implementation of a wider range of strategies for learning and teaching in reading; and
- the further development of learning, teaching and assessment in writing.

### **Key findings**

- There is a well-embedded and rigorous culture of self-evaluation which informs effective intervention strategies to meet the diverse range of the children's needs. The senior leadership and co-ordinators monitor and evaluate effectively all aspects of the provision and the impact on the children's learning; the detailed evaluations of learning and teaching inform accurately subsequent actions for improvement.
- The teachers have undertaken relevant staff development, including through the shared education partnership with a local school, to increase staff capacity and to improve progression and challenge in the teaching of reading and writing. There is evidence of an improved reading culture across the school; the most able readers in year seven read fluently and maturely and have high levels of understanding of more challenging reading materials. The children produce recount writing of a high quality across the key stages; their written work becomes increasingly sophisticated as they move up through the year groups.

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

The ETI was unable to evaluate:

- 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 children reported that they feel safe in the school and that they are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or welfare. 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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