

PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Nicholas' Primary School,
Ardglass, County Down

Maintained, co-educational

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



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

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Department of Education
Department for the Economy
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CUSTOMER
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Sustaining Improvement Inspection of St Nicholas' Primary School, Ardglass, County Down (403-6113)

Introduction

The previous inspection in March 2014 evaluated the overall effectiveness of St Nicholas' Primary School as good¹. In the interim, there has been a change in senior leadership with the appointment of a principal in August 2014 and the appointment of a senior teacher in September 2016. The school's enrolment has increased significantly since the last inspection. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 22 May 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 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 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 school also provided evidence of provision for safeguarding as part of the inspection.

The lines of inquiry during the SII were:

- the progress being made in addressing an area for improvement from the original inspection in 2014, that being to evaluate the impact of the school development plan, action plans and systematic cycles of monitoring and evaluation in bringing about improvement in the children's learning; and
- to evaluate the quality of the learning experience for those children who have been identified as having additional needs.

Key findings

- The school development plan has been created through wide consultation and is underpinned by action plans which are well-constructed. Through the leadership of the principal, the school has now in place systematic cycles for monitoring and evaluating the quality of learning and teaching.
- Children who are identified as requiring support with aspects of their learning are identified early through: excellent communication with local pre-school providers; well-established links with the local Sure Start; and, rigorous analysis of the school's internal assessment data. The children's individual education plans and samples of their work show that most children make good progress in their learning. Recently implemented programmes, for example, reading partnership and numeracy support, have impacted positively on the children's literacy and numeracy development with almost all of the children demonstrating significant progress in their learning. There is evidence of a notable range of links and partnerships with others to support the children in their learning.

¹ A school evaluated previously as good has been reported as the school demonstrating the capacity to identify and bring about improvement.

The ETI was unable to evaluate:

- the quality of the learning and teaching within the classroom; and
- the effectiveness of the work of the co-ordinators.

Safeguarding

During the inspection, the school provided evidence that satisfactory arrangements for safeguarding reflect broadly² the guidance issued by the relevant Departments. 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 staff, 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.

² From January 2017, arrangements evaluated previously as satisfactory are reported as reflect broadly the guidance.

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