

EDUCATION AND TRAINING
INSPECTORATE

PRIMARY INSPECTION

Newtownstewart Model Primary School
Newtownstewart, County Tyrone

Controlled, DE Ref No (201-6262)

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in May 2024



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Follow-up to the inspection of Newtownstewart Model Primary School, Newtownstewart, BT78 4EX (201-6262)

Introduction

Newtownstewart Model Primary School is a controlled primary school situated in the town of Newtownstewart, County Tyrone. The children who attend the school come predominantly from the town and the surrounding rural areas.

The follow-up inspection was carried out in May 2024 and provided the school with the opportunity to demonstrate its progress in addressing the areas for action from the time of the last follow-up inspection in November 2017 and the monitoring visit in October 2021.

Views of parents, staff and children

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) issued online confidential questionnaires to children in year 7, parents and staff in advance of the follow-up inspection.

Almost all of the children in Year 7 responded to the online questionnaire. They all agreed that everyone is welcomed, valued and respected in Newtownstewart Model Primary School. They reported that their opinions are sought on the types of learning activities they enjoy. The inspectors also met with groups of year 3 to year 7 children. They talked very positively about how well the school supports their mental well-being through the 'Ruby's Worry' approach which develops the children's emotional literacy giving the children the language they need to express their feelings and anxieties. The children also talked about how they succeeded in and enjoyed sports and competitions. They spoke of how they were very happy and safe in school and knew what to do if they had any concerns about their safety or well-being.

Just over one-quarter of the parents responded to the online questionnaire, with all agreeing that they are informed about how to report a safeguarding concern and that their child is encouraged to take regular exercise and eat healthily. Almost all agree that their child is making good progress in their learning and the shared education experiences are having a positive impact on the local community. There were eight written comments from the parents and a summary of these was communicated to the principal and chair of the board of governors.

Almost all of the staff completed the confidential questionnaire and were wholly positive about how they work collegially to bring about improvement and how they have benefitted from professional learning opportunities.

Key actions

During this period, the key actions which affect the work of the school include:

- the external support provided by the Education Authority (EA), in relation to whole-school improvement; including school development planning and action-planning processes and the monitoring and evaluating role of the co-ordinators;
- the engagement of staff in a range of professional learning courses, including those provided by the EA and the Education and Training Inspectorate (Empowering Improvement Workshops);
- significant investment in information and communication technology hardware and associated professional learning for staff; and
- the review of co-ordinator roles and responsibilities, including implementing an annual monitoring and evaluation schedule with a range of approaches.

Key findings

- There are clear strategic priorities within the current school development plan which are informed appropriately by consultations with a range of stakeholders including staff, governors, parents and children. The coordinators are now well established in their roles and their action plans have concise measurable targets. There are well-embedded systems in place to monitor and evaluate rigorously the impact of the improvement work on the quality of teaching and the children's progress in their learning. The school have implemented planning, teaching and assessment practices to support children's learning; as a consequence, all children are progressing and learning at least in line with their ability in literacy.
- The staff work collegially and, as reflective practitioners, have developed a culture of trust and openness; they observe each other's practice and provide appropriate support and challenge. They value the views of the children and use feedback from focus groups to review their planning, in order to better meet the interests and needs of the children.
- The staff take ownership of their professional development, engaging proactively in research and accessing relevant training to enable them to address the identified priorities for development. The school has introduced two new approaches to guided reading. 'Reciprocal Reading' is a structured method of guided reading where children take on group roles to explore and find meaning in texts. The approach is empowering the children in key stages (KS) 1 and 2 to take on leadership roles. The children work independently and are developing well their understanding of the text,

expanding their vocabulary and questioning skills and exploring the role of the characters within the texts. The school has identified the need to refine and embed the reciprocal reading strategy. While doing this, consideration should also be given to extending the reading resources used for reciprocal reading, beyond the guided reading scheme, to include a range of novels which reflect the children's interests and provide further challenge.

- The school has also introduced a commercial online adaptive reading programme which is used to monitor and manage the children's independent reading and comprehension. The children who spoke to the inspectors reported that they enjoy reading a variety of books. They particularly enjoy the competitive element and in-built quizzes of the reading programme, which help them to recognise and celebrate their progress.
- The staff identified the need to provide additional literacy support to a small number of children in KS 1, mainly in relation to the reading and spelling of a range of key words. In response, the staff devised an innovative strategy to provide this support through the introduction of a 'Key Word Buddy' where children in year 6 and year 7 are partnered with the KS 1 children, and they engage in a variety of word games during three short, focused sessions per week. As a result, the KS 1 children are making progress in their reading and spelling of key words. In addition, this approach is developing the KS 2 children's sense of responsibility and their confidence and communication skills.
- Through the well-established Shared Education partnership, the staff have accessed training to implement an approach which uses talking as a means of developing the children's writing. The teachers across the partnership schools have benefited from working together to plan collaboratively and share resources. Subsequently, there has been a positive impact on the quality of the children's written work and in their oral responses. The children can articulate their thinking, structure their answers and produce creative responses in their writing. The staff have identified appropriately the opportunity to expand this approach to develop further the children's mathematical problem-solving skills.
- It continues to be important that the employing authority, governors, and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school in order to address the current and future needs of the children and the staff.

Child Protection

At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the school demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance.

Going Forward

In Newtownstewart Model Primary School the staff and children work effectively to grow together as a community of learning. ETI will continue to work with Newtownstewart Model Primary School including to share examples of effective practice from which others may learn.

The aspects of practice which should be shared more widely include:


- the approaches used to develop the children's oracy as a means to improve their reading, writing and comprehension.

Newtownstewart Model Primary School is well placed to take forward the areas for consideration detailed in this report. No further follow-up inspection is required.

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