

## **Education and Training Inspectorate**

### **Report of a Follow-up Inspection**

#### **St Finian's Primary School Newtownards**

**June 2016**

## **FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF ST FINIAN'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, NEWTOWNARDS, COUNTY DOWN (403-3017)**

The ETI acknowledges that the school has had to deal with several pastoral issues throughout the FUI process. The teachers are to be commended for their hard work and dedication to the children in St Finian's.

The original inspection of St Finian's Primary School in 2014 highlighted strengths in the children's motivation to engage in the learning process and their exemplary behaviour; the communication with the parents and the Principal's commitment to developing the work of the school. It also highlighted the following areas for improvement:

- for all the teachers to develop a shared understanding of, and implement, the learning and teaching approaches required to provide high quality literacy and numeracy programmes which meet the needs of all the children more effectively;
- to adopt a more rigorous approach to planning, monitoring and evaluating the learning and teaching in order to build more effectively on the children's prior learning and ensure that all lessons provide the appropriate breadth of learning and challenge.

The inspection conclusion in September 2014 was that:

'In most of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided in this school is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in achievements and standards, learning and teaching and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively.'

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out two monitoring visits on 11 May 2015 and 11 April 2016 and a follow-up inspection in June 2016.

The action plans received by the Department of Education following the inspection were of a very good quality. The school's development plan (SDP) was adjusted in light of the inspection findings.

In the interval since the inspection, the following actions which affect the work of the school have taken place:

- the teachers have worked together to develop an agreed teaching and learning policy;
- there has been increased monitoring of classroom practice;
- new coordinators were appointed and all received training;
- the coordinators have analysed data at whole school level;
- teachers have analysed data at class level;
- analysis of the data was used to identify areas for development in literacy and numeracy;
- a new register of low and under achievers was created;

- children identified as requiring additional support with their learning are identified and withdrawal support is provided;
- the school received well targeted support from the South Eastern Region Authority;
- the role of 'link governors' was introduced;
- the process of monitoring teacher's planning has been established;
- scrutiny of the children's work through 'book scoops' has been established;
- assessment for learning (AFL) strategies were developed; and
- electronic copy of classroom observations established for dissemination of best practice.

The following are the most important improvements since the original inspection.

- The SDP and associated action plans are effective working documents that highlight appropriate areas for development.
- The coordinators are implementing their training effectively into their practice; they now have a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities and have worked very hard to bring about improvements in their areas of responsibility; in particular to improve the quality of planning, learning, teaching and assessment in literacy and numeracy across the school. They undertake regular classrooms observations' scrutiny of the children's books and the quality of the teacher's planning; constructive feedback is given to the teachers and often identifies areas for further development.
- Data is now used more effectively to highlight strengths and areas for improvement in learning and teaching. Since the original inspection the children's achievements have improved and now almost all of the children make progress and achieve in line with or above expectation in both literacy and numeracy.
- Assessment for learning strategies have been developed and are used in all classroom practice and in the feedback to children on how to improve their work. Differentiation is now included in teachers planning, children's books and classroom practice.
- All of the teaching observed during the FUI process was highly effective; the lessons have a better structure, the teachers recap of previous learning, and the learning intentions and success criteria are shared with the children and revisited at the end of the lesson. There is now greater challenge in the learning and the children are now more purposefully engaged and enthusiastic in their learning. The teachers build on previous learning; the children are using higher order thinking skills, ie, predicting, thinking, checking, and are able to use and explain the range of strategies they use. Through the development and use of a 'working wall' the teachers make effective use of the learning environment to support the children with their learning.

- The introduction of withdrawal sessions for those children who require additional support in learning is having a positive impact on the children's learning; almost all of the children are making good progress in their learning this is evident through their improved scores in literacy and numeracy.
- The foundation stage teachers have worked hard to develop play based learning indoors and outdoors. Play based learning is now used more effectively to support the children's learning in literacy and numeracy. The year one teacher is developing very effective links with the local preschool providers to ensure a smooth transition to year and to build more effectively on the children's prior learning in the preschool settings.
- The governors have worked very hard to establish a 'link' governor to liaise with all of the teachers; the teachers regularly engage with the governors and provide updates on their work. The role of the governors is now considered to be an integral part of the management structure; they are more involved in supporting teachers to develop best practice to improve learning and teaching; they implement their training effectively and feel they are better placed to exercise their challenge function.
- The school is now ready to embed all the best practice they have introduced and can celebrate all the improvement they have brought about in the best interest of the children.

## **Conclusion**

The school now demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.

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