

EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE

PRIMARY INSPECTION

St Joseph's Primary School, Drumquin,
County Tyrone

Maintained co-educational DE Ref No: 203-2700

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in October 2021



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Follow-up to the inspection of St Joseph's Primary School, Drumquin, County Tyrone, BT78 4QY

Introduction

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a follow-up inspection of St Joseph's Primary School in October 2017¹, which concluded that the school needed to address important areas for improvement in the interests of all the learners.

The follow-up inspection identified that the following areas for improvement remained, namely:

- to develop an effective team to lead and co-ordinate key curriculum areas; and
- to improve further the literacy provision, with a particular focus on writing, including the dissemination of the most effective practice within the school.

The school's subsequent action plans for improvement were of a good quality and were adjusted appropriately in light of the feedback given by the ETI. Over time, the school's development plan was adjusted in light of the inspection findings, the school's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and through their own self-evaluation and improvement processes.

In September 2021, the board of governors requested a follow-up inspection. While inspection continued to be paused owing to the COVID-19 pandemic², the Chief Inspector agreed to the request by exception, and ETI conducted a second follow-up inspection on 12 and 13 October 2021.

In the interval since the follow-up inspection, the school reported that it received very good external support from the Education Authority (EA) in relation to supporting and developing the teaching staff, including the review of co-ordinators' roles and responsibilities and the subsequent development of a team to lead the curriculum areas. The principal acknowledged the very good pastoral support provided to her by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) since taking up post. Both the EA and CCMS reported a collaborative and shared approach to supporting the school.

Consequently, there have been improvements in the quality of education as reported in the key findings below.

During this period, the other actions or changes which affect the work of the school include:

- the appointment of a new principal and three new teachers;
- the increased enrolment by 9% to 144 children;

¹ [Follow-up Inspection \(Involving Action Short of Strike\) – St Joseph's Primary School, Drumquin](#)

² Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, formal inspections across all phases of education and training were paused on 18 March 2020 (subject to review): [COVID-19 - ETI response](#)

- the review of co-ordinator roles, including the appointment of assistant learning co-ordinators for key curricular areas; and
- the further training and development of governors.

Over the same period, the proportion of children attending the school who require additional help with aspects of their learning has increased by 10% to almost 25% of the school's enrolment; the proportion of children entitled to free school meals has almost halved and now stands at 12%.

Key findings

The outcomes for learners remain good. The children are very friendly, well settled and enthusiastic about their learning. Their behaviour is excellent. Almost all of the children listen attentively and engage and converse eagerly in class, particularly during the regular opportunities for paired and group work. Throughout the school, the children's oracy and leadership skills are extended through, for example, their roles as 'Wellbeing Wonders', school librarians, 'physical education and playground buddies', and through their participation in the school- and eco-councils. A group of children in year 6 spoke of their enjoyment of being back in school and the importance of caring and looking after one another, especially the younger children.

The children from year 7 who met with inspectors said that they enjoy reading and spoke confidently about their favourite authors, genres, and writing styles and techniques, such as, parody and stereotyping. The children benefit from a more structured approach to the teaching of writing as evidenced in their literacy books, on wall displays and in class scrap books.

The quality of provision is now good. All of the lessons observed were consistently good and a small number were very good. The lessons were: well structured and sequenced; and, the teachers used a good variety of approaches and strategies to engage the children and progress their learning.

The teachers' planning is comprehensive and makes appropriate connections across the curriculum. They have a shared understanding of how to progress and develop the children's writing to improve further the standards they attain, as evidenced through the detailed writing scheme. There remains a need to ensure that the planned differentiation provides appropriate opportunities to extend the learning for the more able children in every class.

Digital literacy skills are being developed well through the integration of a range of appropriate e-learning opportunities in the classroom, for example, the development of comprehension skills using game-based learning platforms; aspects of this work are supported well by the children in key stage 2 who are 'digital leaders.'

The teachers make effective use of the school's qualitative and quantitative information to identify children who require additional support and to plan appropriate strategies and interventions to address their learning needs. The children's work is marked regularly and there are good opportunities for the children to engage in self- and peer- assessment. The children would benefit from further opportunities to correct and learn from their errors.

The quality of leadership and management is now good. There is a shared and collaborative approach to school improvement which has resulted in effective working relationships and evident teamwork. The improved confidence and capacity of the learning co-ordinators in leading and managing their respective areas of responsibility is underpinned by a responsive programme of professional learning. There are now good systems in place to oversee the children's outcomes, including the analysis of the school's qualitative and quantitative data, systematic book reviews and regular review of the teachers' planning.

The governors are better informed about the children's outcomes and provide a robust support and challenge function. Co-ordinators attend the governors' meetings and governors have also had the opportunity to review the standard of work in the children's books. Since the return to school, the whole-school priorities and targets have been amended appropriately to reflect the current COVID-19 pandemic context and build on the lessons learned during the extended periods of remote learning. The outworking of these targets is evident in the supportive and positive working relationships that have been nurtured throughout the school, most notably the target that, 'the children feel healthy, happy and safe and are ready to learn.'

Overall effectiveness

St Joseph's Primary School demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interests of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement in:

- providing suitable challenge for the more able children.

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