

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRIMARY INSPECTION



Strandtown Primary School, Belfast

Controlled, co-educational DE Ref No (101-0252)

Report of a Sustaining Improvement Inspection in May 2019



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



Sustaining Improvement Inspection of Strandtown Primary School, Belfast (101-0252)

Introduction

The previous inspection in January 2016 evaluated the overall effectiveness of Strandtown Primary School as having a high level of capacity for sustained improvement. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 30 May 2019.

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 line of inquiry during the SII was to:

- improve the learning and teaching of writing by raising further the standards in writing and increasing the opportunities for extended writing.

Key findings

- There exists a whole-school, collegial approach to continuous improvement and professional development and capacity-building for all staff, including a research-based approach. The school development plan is informed by extensive consultation with all stakeholders. Parents and children are informed of the key priorities within the development plan and provide regular feedback in respect of the areas being addressed. The well-embedded processes of self-evaluation across the school, including within the development of literacy, are underpinned by rigorous monitoring and evaluating. Effective use is made of the extensive range of qualitative and quantitative data to: set whole-school, class and individual targets for improvement; plan effective interventions; and, track progress in learning.
- During the inspection, all of the lessons observed were very good and outstanding. The teachers employed a wide range of innovative approaches to the development of writing within the stimulating and appropriately-challenging lessons. The children have excellent opportunities to write in a variety of contexts and for a range of audiences. In the 'free write'¹ sessions there is an implicit and effective development of the children's independent extended writing skills which link closely to the World Around Us and the trio of arts; drama, music and art. Planning in literacy is of a very high quality, it is extremely well structured and ensures the progressive development of the wide range of writing genre throughout the school. Information and communication technology (ICT) is meaningfully integrated into the literacy lessons.
- Across the school, the children are highly motivated and engage enthusiastically in their extended writing. The children in all year groups: write independently across a range of genres; and, plan, draft and edit their own work with increasing confidence and competence. The dedicated class, corridor and shared whole-school writing displays create a celebratory, literacy-rich environment which charts their writing journey. The children make independent choices of their

¹ 'Free write' is where the children choose independently the genre and mode of presentation for their extended writing based on a World Around Us theme or Arts focus.

writing genre and working style as they undertake 'free write' sessions. Their work is of a consistently high standard and the children use confidently the wide range of excellent resources, including ICT, to plan, present and display their work. Staff place an important emphasis on, and model clearly, self- and peer-assessment which has resulted in all children engaging regularly in high-level analysis of their own and others' work. The children's focus group builds on this practice and provides feedback on their learning, and reflect on and review literacy lessons to ensure the high quality learning and teaching is maintained and further developed.

- In discussion with the inspectors, a group of articulate year 6 and 7 children spoke excitedly about the opportunities they have for independent, extended writing. They highlighted, in particular, their enhanced vocabulary and improved understanding of writing genre and conventions of language. All the children recognise the progression in their literacy achievement which they can track easily through their literacy portfolio and year-on-year literacy books. They welcome the opportunity they have, through the School Council and curricular and pastoral focus groups, to contribute to decision-making within the school.

Safeguarding

During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect the guidance from the Department of Education. The comprehensive safeguarding programme supports effectively the school development plan priority of 'making good citizens'. There is a regular focus on online safety within whole school assemblies and training delivered by staff. The preventative curriculum includes an extensive range of interventions and support mechanisms for individual and groups of children.

The year 6 children, with whom the inspectors met, reported that they feel safe in school and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or welfare. The children know how to keep safe online, when at school or at home.

Conclusion

Strandtown Primary School continues to demonstrate a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will continue to monitor how the school sustains improvement.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2019

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the ETI website: www.etini.gov.uk