

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRIMARY INSPECTION



St Mary's Primary School, Mullymesker, County Fermanagh

Controlled, co-educational DE ref no (203-1890)

Report of a Sustaining Improvement Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in February 2019



The Education and Training Inspectorate
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Sustaining Improvement Inspection of St Mary's Primary School, Mullymesker, County Fermanagh (203-1890)

Introduction

The previous inspection in January 2016 evaluated the overall effectiveness of St Mary's Primary School as having the capacity to identify and bring about improvement. Since that inspection, the school has continued to engage in a Shared Education partnership with three other local primary schools. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 7 February 2019.

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 the teachers would not be co-operating with the inspectors. The principal co-operated with the inspection in relation to her safeguarding responsibilities. 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

Owing to the school's participation in industrial action:

- the inspection was unable to focus on evaluating the extent to which the school is capable of demonstrating its capacity to effect improvement through self-evaluation and effective school planning; and
- a line of inquiry was not selected by the school from the development plan priorities.

Key findings

- A group of year 6 children met with the inspector and spoke positively about their learning experiences. They articulated clearly, practical examples of how they were challenged and encouraged to approach problem solving using differing methodologies. The children also described how they were encouraged to discuss their chosen approach with peers, prior to explanation or presentation to the teacher. They participate in a range of extra-curricular activities and have performed at the 'Peace Proms'¹.
- The children reported and provided examples of how they have can influence their own learning through opportunities to suggest what they would specifically like to learn within a particular topic and how their topic work relates to their future roles as contributors to society. Additionally, the children explained their opportunities to develop leadership capabilities through their roles in the School-Council and as 'transition buddies' for the local playgroup children transferring into year 1.

¹ The Peace Proms is a touring production fronted by the Cross Border Orchestra of Ireland which performs with the Peace Choir, made up of 3,500 primary school children from all over Northern Ireland.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- a line of inquiry; and
- the quality of learning and teaching within the classrooms.

Safeguarding

- During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education (DE). The school's child protection and safeguarding policy complies with all statutory guidance and has been ratified by the board of governors. Whilst compliant, the school has identified accurately, a review of the anti-bullying policy in preparation for the impending changes to statutory requirements.
- The inspector met with a small group of year 6 children who unanimously stated that they feel happy and safe in school. The children reported that they know what to do and who to talk to if they are concerned about their safety or well-being. The children referred to their anti-bully week and the large number of external advisors, including the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), who have visited to support the school's preventative curriculum. 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. The school is a high priority for future inspection with no further notice.

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