

PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Strathearn School Preparatory
Department, Belfast

Voluntary, preparatory

Report of an Inspection (Involving
Action Short of Strike) in
November 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

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INTRODUCTION

1. Context

Strathearn Preparatory Department (Penrhyn) is a voluntary preparatory department of Strathearn Grammar School, situated in the suburbs of East Belfast. It is located in two large Victorian houses in the vicinity of Strathearn Grammar. Some of the children attending the school come from the local area but the catchment area extends to outlying parts of North Down and beyond. The enrolment has increased in recent years; approximately 15% of the children have special educational needs and a small minority are entitled to free school meals. The principal of Strathearn Grammar School and Preparatory Department has been in post from January 2017 and the majority of the teachers in the preparatory department have been appointed since the last inspection.

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 none of the teachers would be co-operating with the inspectors. 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.

Strathearn School Preparatory Department	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Enrolment	131	142	139	148
% Attendance	97.6	97.9	98	92
% NI Primary School Average	95.4	95.5	N/A	N/A
Percentage of children entitled to Free School Meals (FSM)	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.4
No. of children on SEN register	20	18	15	22
% of children on SEN register	15.9	13.1	11.2	15
No. of children with statements of educational needs	*	*	*	*

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

N/A not available

2. Views of parents and staff

Thirteen percent of parents and 57% of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaires. Most of the responses to the parental questionnaire were positive and they praised the school's culture for encouraging individuality, confidence and caring dispositions in the children. The responses to the staff questionnaire endorsed the leadership of the school and how the children are prepared well for the future, in particular, for the next stage of their learning. The ETI has communicated to the principal and representatives from the board of governors the main findings, and the small number of issues arising from the questionnaires.

3. Focus of the inspection

The ETI was unable to evaluate:

- outcomes for children with a particular focus on literacy including across the curriculum;
- quality of provision with a particular focus on literacy; and
- quality of leadership and management.

Where it has been possible to evaluate aspects of the foci, they are reported below.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Unable to assure of the quality of education
Outcomes for learners	No performance level available
Quality of provision	No performance level available
Leadership and management	No performance level available

KEY FINDINGS

5. Outcomes for learners

- The small number of year seven children who met with inspectors were articulate, expressed their enjoyment of reading, justified confidently their choice of genre and author, and welcomed the opportunity to read to and perform for a variety of audiences.
- In discussion with a group of year six children, the children spoke enthusiastically about their learning experiences and their developing interests. They listened carefully to one another speak and gave well considered responses in a confident manner.

The ETI was unable to evaluate:

- the learning outcomes for the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning;
- progression in the children's learning; and
- the children's wider skills and dispositions.

6. Quality of provision

- The curriculum is enriched with challenging and interesting educational visits, for example, the year five and year six children attend the Royal Ulster Academy annual art exhibition in the Ulster Museum.

The ETI was unable to evaluate:

- the quality of the curriculum;
- the effectiveness of the guidance and support in bringing about high quality individual learning experiences;
- the effectiveness and impact of planning, teaching, learning and assessment in promoting successful learning; and
- care and welfare.

7. Leadership and management

- The school development plan has been informed by appropriate consultation. There is limited evidence that the process for monitoring the impact on the children's learning enables staff to evaluate fully their progress.
- During the inspection, the ETI met with representatives of the board of governors who have a wide range of expertise, and are supportive of the school.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the effectiveness of strategic leadership and governance;
- the effectiveness and impact of middle leadership; and
- the effectiveness of action to promote and sustain improvement.

8. Safeguarding

During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education.

The year six children reported that they feel safe in school. They know what to do and who to speak to if they are concerned about their safety and well-being. However, owing to industrial action, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the outworking of the arrangements for safeguarding in the school. The school needs to:

- review and update the intimate care policy and the anti-bullying policy to reflect the current guidance from the Department of Education.

9. Overall effectiveness

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.

Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the ETI website: [The Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework \(ISEF\): Effective Practice and Self-Evaluation Questions for Primary | Education Training Inspectorate](#)

Inspectors observe learning and teaching, scrutinise documentation and the children's written work and hold formal and informal discussions with children, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for inspection include:

- a meeting with a representative from the governors;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Where, owing to the action short of strike, this evidence base was not available, it has been referenced in the body of the inspection report.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with the principal and representatives of the board of governors;
- meetings with the principal and head of the preparatory department;
- documentation from the board of governors;
- safeguarding documentation and school policies;
- the school development plan and associated action plans;
- teachers' long and medium-term planning;
- samples of children's written work;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

Quantitative terms

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75% - 90%
A majority	-	50% - 74%
A significant minority	-	30% - 49%
A minority	-	10% - 29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

Performance levels

The ETI use the following performance levels when reporting on outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management¹:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the school:

The school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school 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.
The school needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection in 12 to 18 months.
The school needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection in 18 to 24 months.

¹ And the overall provision in a unit, as applicable.

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