

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRIMARY INSPECTION



Ballykeel Primary School, Ballymena, County Antrim

Controlled, co-educational DE ref no (301-3315)

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



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
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Sustaining Improvement Inspection of Ballykeel Primary School, Ballymena, County Antrim (301-3315)

Introduction

The previous inspection in December 2015 evaluated the overall effectiveness of Ballykeel Primary School as having a high level of capacity for sustained improvement. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 28 January 2019. The school is participating in a longstanding shared education partnership, involving all classes, with a local maintained school; there is a joint School Council that plans events and activities. The school has had a Green Flag Award as an Eco-school since 2003.

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 principal and vice-principal co-operated with the inspection team in relation to their leadership and 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

- The inspectors met with a group of year 6 children who reported enthusiastically that they enjoy participating in a wide range of after-school clubs and in the shared education activities. They have an excellent understanding of fairness in relation to elections for the School- and Eco-school Councils and articulate well the role they play in decision making. The children's work is appropriately valued and celebrated through attractive, stimulating wall displays; they produce high quality writing across a wide range of forms and genres.

The comprehensive school development planning process is underpinned by appropriate consultation with staff, children, parents and governors. Rigorous analysis of qualitative and quantitative data is being used to track trends and identify priorities for improvement linked closely to raising standards; the high quality action plans guide well the improvement work. The school's processes for self-evaluation in literacy and numeracy leading to improvement are well developed. The ETI was unable to evaluate:

- the 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. The inspectors met with a group of year 6 children who spoke confidently and maturely about what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being. They have a very good understanding of how to stay safe online and report that they feel happy and safe in school. 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. This will be reflected in future inspection activity.

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