

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRIMARY INSPECTION



Ballysally Primary School, Coleraine, County Londonderry

Controlled, co-educational DE Ref No (301-6252)

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

Sustaining Improvement Inspection of Ballysally Primary School, Coleraine, County Londonderry (301-6252)

Introduction

The previous inspection in December 2013 evaluated the overall effectiveness of Ballysally Primary School as very good (from September 2015, the overall effectiveness of a school evaluated previously as outstanding or very good has been reported as a school demonstrating a high level of capacity for sustained improvement). Since the last inspection, the enrolment has seen year-on-year increases and now stands at 291 children, which is a seventeen per-cent increase over the period. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 20 March 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 none of the teachers would be co-operating with the inspectors. The principal and other leaders co-operated with the inspectors in relation to leadership, curricular 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

The purpose of the SII was to evaluate 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 lines of inquiry during the SII were:

- to assess the improvements made to the quality of the science provision across the school; and
- to assess how the school serves well its community.

Key findings

- A group of children from year 6, who met with the inspectors, talked positively about their experiences in school and enthused about aspects of mathematics, creative writing and investigative work in science. They commended the extra-curricular provision, which has a broad variety of offer and high participation levels. The children spoke well about the many opportunities the school provides them to develop leadership roles, including those through the School Council, as peer mediators and as 'digital leaders' when they reach year 7.

- The very capable senior leadership of the school continues to inspire an effective culture of supporting the professional development, capacity and well-being of staff. The school continues to have effective consultation, monitoring and evaluation processes in place, which identifies appropriate priorities contained in the school development plan and allows the various stakeholders in the school to contribute to the reviews.
- Improvements have been made to the World Around Us curriculum through planning and implementing a more coherent science provision across all key stages. This has been achieved by committed and enthusiastic leadership and by developing staff capacity to integrate appropriate science-related learning within existing topics and themes, which is reflected in good quality and lucid planning and in the range and quality of the children's work. The school reported that its internal monitoring and evaluation processes indicate that the children enjoy their learning in science and this finding is reflected in what the children reported to the inspectors. In addition, the work observed provides authentic support for developing the children's knowledge, understanding and skills in literacy and numeracy.

The school continues to maintain very good links with the community it serves contributing to improving the provision further for the children, through the very wide range of external partnerships that contribute to raising aspirations and expectations for the children. The school is a major partner and contributor to the Ballysally Integrated Nurturing Project, which is a community initiative promoting joined-up solutions to improve lives and life chances for all. At the time of inspection, the school hosted a whole-school, careers-related day, which was extremely well attended by parents and carers and supported by around 60 volunteers, from the world of work, who gave of their time and considerable experience in raising the children's aspirations and interest in career possibilities. The high quality event attracted a number of distinguished visitors and co-organisers, some of whom travelled over from England to attend. The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the lines 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. In discussion with the inspectors, the group of year 6 children stated that they feel safe and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or welfare. However, owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the arrangements for safeguarding in the school.

Conclusion

Owing to the impact of 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 education provided for the children. This will be reflected in future inspection activity.

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