

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRIMARY INSPECTION



St James's Primary School and Nursery Unit, Newtownabbey, County Antrim

Maintained, co-educational DE Ref No (303-6100)

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

Sustaining Improvement Inspection of St James' Primary School and Nursery Unit, Newtownabbey, County Antrim (303-6100)

Introduction

The previous inspection in February 2016 evaluated the overall effectiveness of St James' Primary School and Nursery Unit as having the capacity to identify and bring about improvement. Since the last inspection, a new vice-principal and numeracy co-ordinator were appointed and the school has upgraded the security, internal appearance and special needs accessibility of the building. 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 co-operated with the inspection team in relation to 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

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:

- improving the consistency of approach to the standards of learning and teaching in mathematics.

Key findings

- A group of year six children, who met with the inspection team, report that they enjoy learning in school and participating in a range of after-school activities. They talk maturely about their leadership roles as 'playground buddies' and their contribution to decision-making and contributing to improvements in the playground as members of the School Council.
- The group of year seven children, who met with the inspection team, were accurate in their mathematical calculations, flexible in their thinking and confident in their knowledge and understanding of all aspects of the mathematics curriculum and relevant mathematical language. The children reported their enjoyment of investigative mathematics and the opportunities to apply their learning to real experiences in the outdoor environment.

- The school has invested in additional practical materials to support mathematical learning; the associated guidance materials, developed in consultation with the staff, aim to ensure greater consistency of approach in learning and teaching. The teachers' planning for effective questioning to develop the children's thinking skills needs to be more fully embedded into this work.
- The school development planning process is underpinned by consultation with staff, children and parents. Links and partnerships with other schools are used well to promote capacity building for the staff on the priority areas in the school development plan.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- 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 children from year 6 reported that they feel safe in school and they know who to speak to if they have a concern. 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 teachers, 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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