

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRIMARY INSPECTION



St Joseph's Primary School, Antrim

Maintained, co-educational DE ref no (303-6050)

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

Sustaining Improvement Inspection of St Joseph's Primary School, Antrim (303-6050)

Introduction

The original inspection in January 2016 evaluated the overall effectiveness of St Joseph's Primary School as having the capacity to identify and bring about improvement. Since the 2016 inspection, the enrolment has increased by approximately 20% and the school leadership team has been restructured to reflect a more distributed leadership model. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 21 January 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 vice-principal co-operated with the inspection team in relation to their child protection 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
- lines of inquiry were not selected by the school from the development plan priorities.

Key findings

- During discussions with the inspectors, a group of year 6 children reported that they enjoy the opportunities to learn new languages and obtain rewards for their endeavours in class. They develop leadership skills while participating as: school councillors; 'playground pals' mentoring scheme; and, the school Eco-Council. The children also described their enjoyment of lessons when their teachers made learning fun and the opportunities to take part in after-school sports activities.

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 (DE). During a discussion with a group of year 6 children, they reported that they feel 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.

The school needs to:

- continue the ongoing process of reviewing and updating the suite of policies to reflect the current DE guidance; and
- ensure that the chair of the board of governors, when reconstituted, attends the next available Education Authority led safeguarding training.

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. The school is a high priority for future inspection with no further notice.

Health and Safety/Accommodation

- The issues raised in the whole-school fire safety risk assessment report and contained in the associated minor works application need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.
- Appropriate and adequate lighting for those children with visual impairment is required in parts of the school building in order that the school complies with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Order (SENDO) legislation.

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