

Education and Training Inspectorate

PRIMARY INSPECTION



St Joseph's Primary School, Crossgar, County Down

Maintained, co-educational DE Ref No (403-1550)

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



The Education and Training Inspectorate
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Sustaining Improvement Inspection of St Joseph's Primary School, Crossgar, County Down (403-1550)

Introduction

The previous inspection in September 2012, evaluated the overall effectiveness of St Joseph's 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). The school took part in the pilot of the sustaining improvement inspection (SII) in September 2015. Since the SII, the enrolment has increased significantly, by 20%, over a three-year period and currently stands at 102 children. One new teacher has also been appointed. The school has a well-established shared education partnership with a local primary school.

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 all of the teachers, would not be co-operating with the inspectors. The principal co-operated with the inspection team in relation to 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 to:

- evaluate the improvements made to the quality of the World Around Us programme throughout the school, in particular, the development of science, technology and enquiry-based learning.

Key findings

- The highly strategic senior leadership has a clear vision for the development of the school which is reflected in a robust school development planning process. Effective consultation at all levels and the rigorous analysis of the school's quantitative and qualitative data are used to identify appropriate priorities for improvement. The school prioritises high quality learning and teaching which is reflected in recent improvement work focused on enhancing opportunities for the children to develop their thinking skills and deepening staff's knowledge and expertise of teaching science through investigative and enquiry-based approaches. The school monitors regularly the impact of the improvement work through well-embedded monitoring and evaluation processes.

- In discussion with a group of year 7 children, they talked enthusiastically and knowledgeably about their range of experiences within the World Around Us programme. Referencing a wide range of photographic evidence, the children highlighted their: increased opportunities to experiment, create, investigate and work collaboratively; improved science skills, such as, carrying out comparative and fair tests and drawing conclusions from their observations; and, enjoyment of learning through a more connected and cross-curricular approach.
- A group of children from year 6, who met with the inspectors, talked positively about their experiences in school and expressed their appreciation of the: very good variety of extra-curricular activities on offer; and, the wide range of visitors to the school and educational visits to local places of interest, which enhance greatly the World Around Us programme.
- It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget in order to address the current and future needs of the children and the staff.

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. The children, who met with the inspectors, reported that they feel safe in school and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety. 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 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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