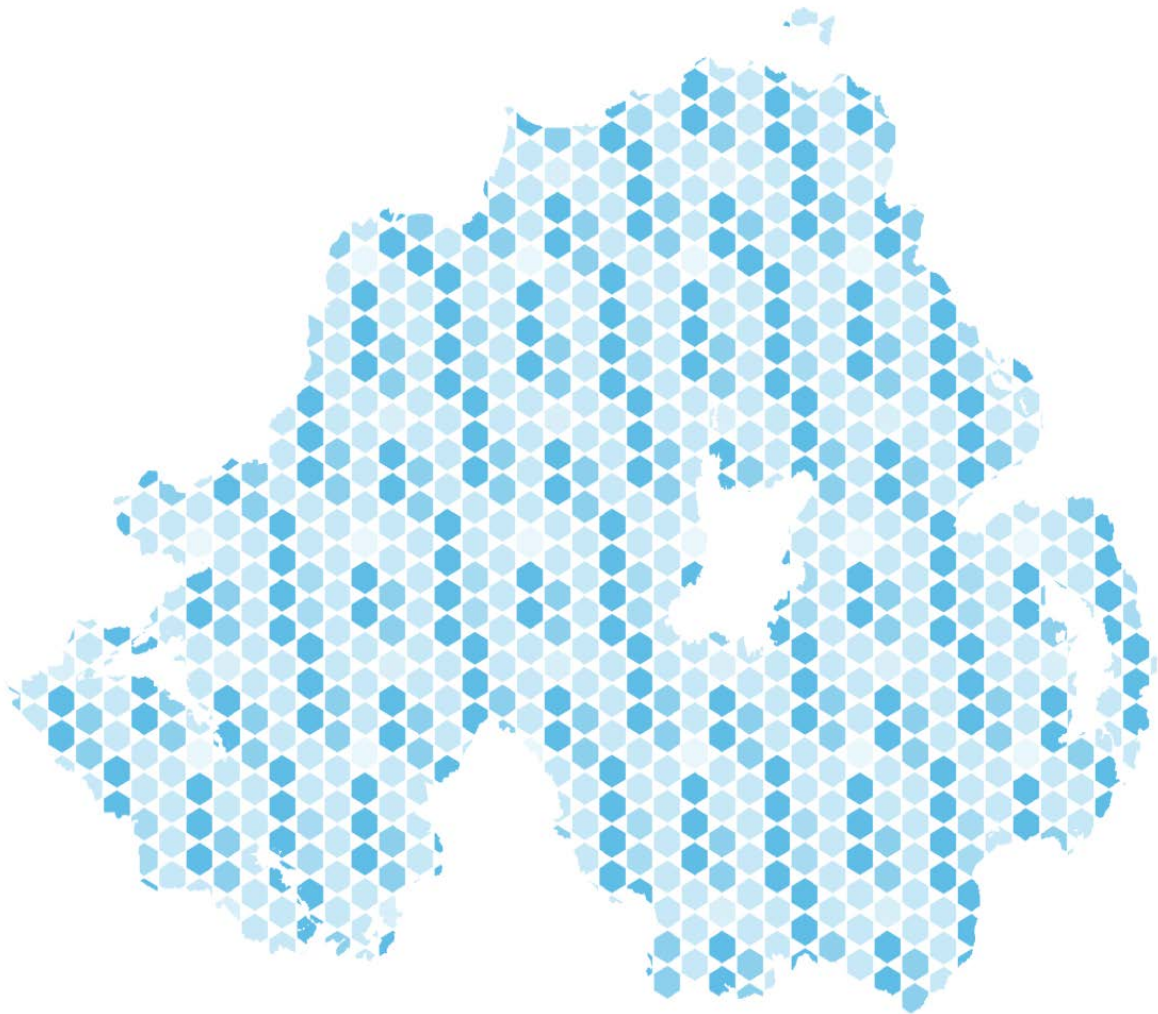


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Oliver Plunkett Primary School,
Belfast

Maintained, co-educational

Report of a Sustaining Improvement
Inspection (Involving Action Short of
Strike) in May 2018



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



Sustaining Improvement Inspection of St Oliver Plunkett Primary School, Belfast, (103-6602)

Introduction

The previous inspection in May 2015 evaluated the overall effectiveness of St Oliver Plunkett Primary School as very good¹. Since the time of the last inspection, enrolment has increased from 641 to 676 children. In the same period, the school has been awarded a range of national awards including a digital leadership award, and has gained the 'Rights Respecting School' status. In this academic year, the school has commenced a Shared Education partnership with another primary school. A sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 21 May 2018.

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 almost all of the teachers would not be co-operating with the inspectors. The ETI have 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 planning.

A line of inquiry selected by the school from the development plan priorities was to:

- improve the outcomes in literacy and numeracy through robust planning for consistently high quality learning experiences across the curriculum.

Key findings

- The school has developed a wide range of approaches and interventions to support the children who may be at risk of low- and/or under-achievement. The school's internal data shows that, in literacy and numeracy, almost all of the children are attaining as expected. A key feature of this development work is the active engagement of the parents and children in the support programmes through, for example, the provision of curriculum information events for all year groups, the sharing of teachers' planning with the parents, and the innovative and creative use of digital technology.
- In discussions with the children from year 7, they spoke positively of the opportunities they had to write in a range of forms for a variety of audiences, and to develop their confidence in speaking in public forums. They read from a range of texts with clarity of expression, intonation and fluency. The children are enthusiastic about their learning in mathematics and have an excellent knowledge, understanding and application of all areas of the mathematics curriculum.

¹ 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 has focused on improving the planning for learning to ensure the children are motivated to learn and make appropriate progress. The staff have improved the use of the teachers' evaluations of their planning to inform more effectively future classroom practice. The staff have engaged in teacher professional learning initiatives to support this work, for example, in the development of teaching strategies to promote higher order thinking skills.
- The leadership at all levels has developed further a culture of robust self-evaluation through: the articulation of a clear vision for improvement by senior leaders; the enhanced role of the curriculum leaders; collegial discussions on effective assessment of the children's progress and on the quality of their work; and, peer lesson observations and regular opportunities for all staff to participate in the dissemination of effective practice within school and in collaboration with other schools, locally and nationally.
- The children in year 6 spoke favourably of: the caring and welcoming ethos; the many ways in which they can put forward their views on the life and work of the school; and, the wide range of learning opportunities across all areas of the curriculum available to them in class, on class visits and through the Extended Schools programme.

The ETI was unable to evaluate:

- 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 group of year 6 children reported that they feel safe in school and that they are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being. 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, and 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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