

EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE

PRIMARY INSPECTION

Parkhall Primary School, Antrim

Controlled, co-educational, DE Ref No 301-6058

Report of a Follow-up Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in June 2023



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Third follow-up to the inspection of Parkhall Primary School, County Antrim (301-6058)

Introduction

The original inspection of Parkhall Primary School was carried out in [November 2015](#) when the school's education provision was evaluated as having important areas for improvement.

A follow-up inspection took place in [May 2017](#), at which time the important areas for improvement had not been progressed sufficiently. A second follow-up inspection in [June 2018](#) was impacted by industrial action short of strike and the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) was unable to evaluate the extent to which the important areas for improvement identified at the time of the original inspection had been addressed.

The ETI carried out a monitoring visit in October 2021 to help the school reflect on its current provision, with a view to being well prepared for the third follow-up inspection. A monitoring visit summary letter was provided to the school and the Department of Education (DE). The areas for improvement were adjusted as a consequence of the monitoring visit, namely to:

- strengthen the play-based learning across the curriculum in the foundation stage;
- ensure that the learning support staff are engaged more purposefully in the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of play-based learning; and
- continue to provide opportunities for the co-ordinators to avail of relevant professional learning in leading effectively their areas of responsibility.

A third follow-up inspection, carried out in June 2023, was also impacted by action short of strike. Prior to the inspection, the school informed the ETI that due to industrial action short of strike, none of the teaching staff would be co-operating with the inspection. Representatives from the school leadership team, including governors, engaged with inspectors in relation to elements of the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils.

As a result of the industrial action, the school was unable to provide a complete inspection evidence base, including observations of teaching and learning, to demonstrate the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. The ETI has a [statutory duty](#) to monitor, inspect and report on the quality of education being provided for children and young people. The follow-up inspection proceeded on a partial basis and the key findings are based on evidence made available at the time of the inspection visit.

Key actions and changes

In the interim period since the inspection in November 2015, the school has received external support from the Education Authority (EA) in relation to developing school leadership and training for governors.

In addition, the school leadership team has:

- introduced systems for tracking, monitoring, and evaluating children's learning to inform teachers' planning;
- put in place targeted teacher-led support for learners identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their literacy and numeracy through the Department of Education's Engage Programme; and
- purchased additional resources for indoor and outdoor play-based learning.

Views of pupils, parents/carers, and staff

Prior to the follow-up inspection, online questionnaires were distributed to parents/carers. A very small number of questionnaires were returned and most indicated that they were satisfied with the running of the school. All of the issues raised in the questionnaire responses were discussed (maintaining the confidentiality of the responses) with the principal and a representative of the board of governors.

As a result of the industrial action short of strike, the year 7 questionnaires were not completed by the children or staff. Therefore, it is not possible to report on the views of the children or staff. The ETI will re-issue the questionnaires at the time of the next inspection visit to complete this follow-up inspection.

Key findings in relation to safeguarding

In meetings with inspectors, representatives of the school leadership team, including governors, engaged in discussions about the procedures and arrangements for safeguarding children. Relevant documents and policies relating to safeguarding were provided and are in line with the guidance from the Department of Education (DE); however, the ETI did not have sufficient evidence to evaluate the school's arrangements for safeguarding children.

In discussions with a small group of children from years 6 and 7, they explained clearly how they keep themselves safe while using the internet and are aware of what to do if they experience unwanted online behaviour. The children know who they can speak with in school if they have concerns about their wellbeing.

Conclusion

The school's third follow-up inspection is incomplete due to industrial action short of strike. The areas for improvement, which were adjusted at the time of the monitoring visit in November 2021, remain as the need to:

- strengthen the play-based learning across the curriculum in the foundation stage;
- ensure that the learning support staff are engaged more purposefully in the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of play-based learning; and
- continue to provide opportunities for the co-ordinators to avail of relevant professional learning in leading effectively their areas of responsibility.

The ETI has been unable to evaluate the school's progress in effecting the required improvements in the quality of its provision for just over six years, since the first follow-up inspection. As the school did not provide sufficient evidence for ETI to evaluate the arrangements for safeguarding children, the DE will write to the EA and the board of governors to seek assurance in relation to the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding children.

The District Inspector will continue to monitor the school's progress, and the follow-up inspection may be completed at the request of the school up to and including September 2023. Subsequently, the inspection will be completed without further notice.

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