

PRIMARY INSPECTION

St Paul's Primary School, Ahoghill,
County Antrim

Maintained co-educational
DE Ref No: 303-6683

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in March 2022

Follow-up to the inspection of St Paul's Primary School, Ahoghill, County Antrim, BT42 1LF

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a second follow-up inspection of St Paul's Primary School in October 2019¹ which concluded that the school needed to address important areas for improvement in the interests of all the learners.

The follow-up inspection identified the following areas for improvement:

- to review the roles, responsibilities and practice of strategic leadership at all levels;
- to develop robust systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of planning, learning and teaching, and assessment to improve further the progression and outcomes for the children; and
- to address urgently the deficits in, and poor management and use of, the accommodation to meet effectively the needs of the children.

As a consequence, the Department of Education made the decision in December 2019 that the school would remain within the Formal Intervention Process in line with its Every School a Good School² policy.

The school's subsequent action plans for improvement were of a good quality and were adjusted appropriately in light of the feedback given by ETI. The school's development plan was also adjusted in light of the inspection findings, the school's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and through their own self-evaluation and improvement processes.

In January 2022, the board of governors requested a follow-up inspection. While inspection continued to be paused owing to the COVID-19 pandemic³, the Chief Inspector agreed to the request by exception, and ETI conducted a third follow-up inspection on 3 and 4 March 2022.

In the interval since the second follow-up inspection, the school received very good external support from the Education Authority (EA) in relation to school improvement, including more accountable leadership at all levels and the development of effective systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of planning, learning, teaching and assessment. The principal and governors acknowledged the very good pastoral support provided to the school by both the EA and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), particularly in relation to staff wellbeing.

¹ [Follow-up inspection of St Paul's Primary School, 2019](#)

² [Every School a Good School](#)

³ Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, formal inspections across all phases of education and training were paused on 18 March 2020 (subject to review): [COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\) - ETI Response](#)

Consequently, there have been improvements in the quality of education as reported in the key findings below.

During this period, the other actions or changes which affect the work of the school include the:

- further development of the shared education partnership with a local controlled primary school;
- development of the outdoor area to include specific learning areas linked to the curriculum;
- further development of the training for the governors; and
- support for leadership and governance from CCMS.

Key findings

The outcomes for learners are now very good. The children are highly motivated and engage enthusiastically with their learning activities; and, their behaviour is excellent. They take great pride in carrying out a wide variety of leadership roles as members of the eco- and school-councils, 'digital leaders' and friendship mentors to the younger children.

By the end of key stage 2, almost all of the children articulate well-informed opinions about their learning experiences. The children's enjoyment of, and their knowledge about, the use of language are extended for many through their regular participation in verse speaking, poetry and persuasive writing competitions at local festivals. The children write confidently across the curriculum and integrate effectively their well-developed information and communication technology (ICT) skills. The children are increasingly confident in the application of their thinking skills, particularly problem-solving, across most areas of the curriculum as they move through the key stages. The school's internal standardised data indicates that almost all of the children are achieving in line with or above expectation in both literacy and numeracy.

The children from year 7, who met with the inspectors, spoke very confidently about their favourite authors and how books capture their imagination and develop their curiosity about the characters and storyline. They spoke positively about how the structured reading programme has encouraged them to develop further their reading capabilities.

The quality of provision is now good. The children's learning develops appropriately through the well-planned and engaging learning activities, as evident in all of the lessons observed during the inspection. The staff's foci on outdoor learning and digital literacy skills extend well the learning experiences across all key stages. The teachers' planning is progressively detailed, meets well the needs of the children and links across the six areas of learning.

The quality of leadership and management is now good. Staff and governors have a collegiate approach and shared understanding about how to bring about improvement in the children's learning experiences and outcomes. There is now an effective system in place to monitor and evaluate the impact of action-planning on the quality of learning and teaching. Curriculum co-ordinators lead their areas more confidently and competently; they lead by example and have introduced monitoring practices, such as, peer-observation, self-evaluation processes, and by providing appropriate feedback to teachers about areas for further development. Continuing professional development is a priority for the school, as is sharing with and learning from the professional expertise within their shared education partnership with a local controlled primary school.

The school responded positively to the challenges presented during the COVID-19 lockdown periods by reflecting and focusing on new priorities. The challenges included: remote learning; continuity of learning for children as they returned to school; targeted interventions through the Engage Programme; outdoor learning; partnerships with parents; and, a focus on health and wellbeing.

The governors engage fully in all aspects of the life and work of the school. The leadership team meet regularly with governors to monitor and review self-evaluation reports and action plans; and, the governors provide well-informed advice and apply an insightful challenge function.

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.

Overall effectiveness

St Paul's Primary School demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interests of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement in:

- embedding further the self-evaluation processes to ensure continued improvement in the areas identified by the school for future development.

Appendix A: Health and Safety/Accommodation

1. The school has identified an accommodation matter which is being progressed by the relevant stakeholders.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2022

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the [ETI website](#)

Follow us on  [@ETI_news](#)  [@ETInews](#)  InsPIRE