

Education and Training Inspectorate PRIMARY INSPECTION



Darkley Primary School, Darkley, County Armagh

Controlled, co-educational DE Ref No: 501-1119

Report of an Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in
September 2019



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

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INTRODUCTION

1. Context

Darkley Primary School is a controlled primary school situated in the village of Darkley. The recently appointed principal took up post in March 2019. Over the last four years, enrolment has increased by around one-third, rising from 71 to 96 children. The school is involved in a shared education partnership with a local special 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 none of the teachers would be co-operating fully with the inspectors. The senior leadership co-operated with the inspection team in relation to their safeguarding responsibilities and aspects of curricular leadership. 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.

Darkley Primary School	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Enrolment	71	76	90	96
% School attendance	95.4	94.9	94.7	N/A
% NI Primary school average	95.5	94.9	N/A	N/A
FSME Percentage ¹	46.5	43.4	42.2	37.5
No. of children on SEN register	12	14	13	17
% of children on SEN register	16.9	18.4	14.4	14
No. of children with statements of educational need	*	*	*	*
No. of newcomer children	*	*	*	*

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

N/A not available

2. Children's, parents' and staff questionnaire responses

As a result of the action short of strike, the school did not distribute the confidential, online questionnaire information to year 7 children, parents and staff. Therefore, it is not possible to report on the views of children, parents and staff.

3. Focus of the inspection

The ETI was unable to evaluate:

- the outcomes for children, with a particular focus on numeracy;
- the quality of provision with a particular focus on numeracy, including across the curriculum; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

¹ The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of children entitled to free school meals.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Unable to assure the quality of education
Outcomes for learners	No performance level available
Quality of provision	No performance level available
Leadership and management	No performance level available

KEY FINDINGS

5. Outcomes for learners

- The school's assessment data indicates that almost all of the children, including those with additional needs in aspects of their learning, are making progress as expected or above in numeracy. In discussion with the inspectors, a group of year 7 children used a range of mathematical strategies with confidence, solved problems accurately and explained clearly how they worked out their answers.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the learning outcomes for the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning;
- progression in the children's learning; and
- the children's wider skills and dispositions.

6. Quality of provision

- The children who met with the inspectors were respectful, enthusiastic about their learning and keen to express their views. They spoke positively about their involvement in the shared education programme, particularly their co-operation with children from a local special school. The children value the opportunities to take on leadership roles through the school council, eco-council and house system.
- The yearly planning for numeracy includes appropriate progression across the year groups.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the quality of the curriculum;
- the effectiveness of the guidance and support in bringing about high quality individual learning experiences;
- the effectiveness and impact of planning, teaching, learning and assessment in promoting successful learning; and
- care and welfare.

7. Leadership and management

- The governors articulate a clear understanding of the school's place in the local community, are well informed about the priorities for further improvement and have worked effectively with senior leaders to bring about a significant increase in enrolment. To extend further their role in supporting and challenging the senior leaders, the governors have identified appropriately the need to work more closely with the curriculum co-ordinators.
- 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 effectiveness of strategic leadership;
- the effectiveness and impact of middle leadership; and
- the effectiveness of action to promote and sustain improvement.

8. Safeguarding

- During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education (DE). The children report that they feel safe in school and appreciate the caring ethos; they know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or welfare. 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:

- update the anti-bullying and positive behaviour policies to reflect DE's guidance.

9. Overall effectiveness

Owing to the impact of the 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 of education being provided for the children. This will be reflected in future inspection activity.

APPENDIX A

Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the ETI website: [The Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework \(ISEF\): Effective Practice and Self-Evaluation Questions for Primary | Education Training Inspectorate](#)

Inspectors observe learning and teaching, scrutinise documentation and the children's written work and hold formal and informal discussions with children, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for inspection include:

- a meeting with a representative of the governors;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- the opportunity for the children, parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential, online questionnaire.

Where, owing to the action short of strike, this evidence base was not available, it has been referenced in the body of the inspection report.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with the principal and the chair of the board of governors;
- meetings with the principal and senior teachers about their safeguarding and curricular responsibilities; and
- meetings with groups of children.

Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

Quantitative terms

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75% - 90%
A majority	-	50% - 74%
A significant minority	-	30% - 49%
A minority	-	10% - 29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

Performance levels

The ETI use the following performance levels when reporting on outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management²:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on governance:

High degree of confidence
Confidence
Limited confidence

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on safeguarding:

Reflects the guidance
Reflects broadly the guidance
Unsatisfactory

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on care and welfare:

Impacts positively on learning, teaching and outcomes for learners.
Does not impacts positively enough on learning, teaching and outcomes for learners.

² And the overall provision in a unit, as applicable.

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the school:

The school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection in 12 to 18 months.
The school needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection in 18 to 24 months.

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