

28th June 2017

Dear Parents

I am writing to share with you some excerpts from the recent inspection in Dromintee Primary School. The teachers were observing union action and as a result, the inspectors were unable to assess the outcomes for children and the quality of provision. No performance level was given. However, verbally they have reassured me that the Governors need have no concern. There are no issues with teaching and learning in the school. The following text will appear in the main body of the inspection report.

School context

Dromintee Primary School is situated in an area of outstanding beauty in the parish of Dromintee in South Armagh. The children who attend the school come from the village and the surrounding rural areas. The school is an integral part of the rural community and has strong links with the local parish and the Gaelic football club. A new principal was appointed in September, 2016.

Union action

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 with the inspectors.

Views of parents and staff

Seventeen percent of parents, a very small number of the teaching staff and most of the support staff responded to the confidential questionnaires. The responses to the parental questionnaire indicated very high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents acknowledged the mutual respect evident across the school community, the supportive learning environment created for the children and the high standards of behaviour within the school. The parents also highlighted their appreciation of the commitment and dedication of the staff; and expressed high levels of support for the enthusiastic new principal and the positive changes she has made in the school to date. The responses to the teaching and support staff questionnaires were also very positive. In particular, the staff highlighted the inclusive, welcoming, pastoral ethos in the school, the very good working relationships amongst the staff and their enjoyment of working in the school. The ETI has reported to the principal and the chair of the board of governors the main findings emerging from the parental and staff questionnaires.

Outcomes for learners

- The achievements and successes of the children are valued and celebrated, evident in the various attractive displays around the school.
- During the inspection, a group of year 7 children read with very high levels of fluency and expression. They demonstrated a very good understanding of different genres and engaged enthusiastically in meaningful discussions with the inspectors about their favourite authors and books.

Quality of provision

- The schools child-centred ethos is underpinned by the school's motto, 'An Léann, An Grá, An Spraoi', which focuses on the promotion of learning, love and enjoyment in all aspects of school life.

- The inspectors had the opportunity to meet with a group of year 6 children. The children talked very openly and positively about their experiences in school. In particular, the children spoke about their enjoyment of learning and how they benefit from their involvement in a wide range of activities beyond the classroom. The children also expressed appreciation for the opportunities they have to take on leadership roles in the school, for example, through the pastoral committee and Eco-council.

Leadership and management

- The school development plan is at the end of the three-year cycle. The new school development plan details a number of well-considered, appropriate priorities and plans are in place to consult with key stakeholders to inform further the school improvement work.
- Effective use is made of performance data to monitor the standards achieved by the children and their progress over time; it is also used effectively to identify those children who may be underachieving or require additional support with aspects of their learning.
- During the inspection, the ETI met with the chair of the board of governors. The governors are clearly child-centred and have a very good range of complementary skills and expertise. They have a clear understanding of the work and context of the school and provide appropriate levels of support and challenge.
- During the inspection, the school provided evidence that satisfactory arrangements for safeguarding reflect broadly the guidance issued by the relevant Departments. The children, with whom the inspectors met, reported that they feel safe in the school and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or welfare.

The full inspection report will be available on the ETi website within the next few days.

www.etini.gov.uk

Fr D Maloney
Chair of the Board of Governors