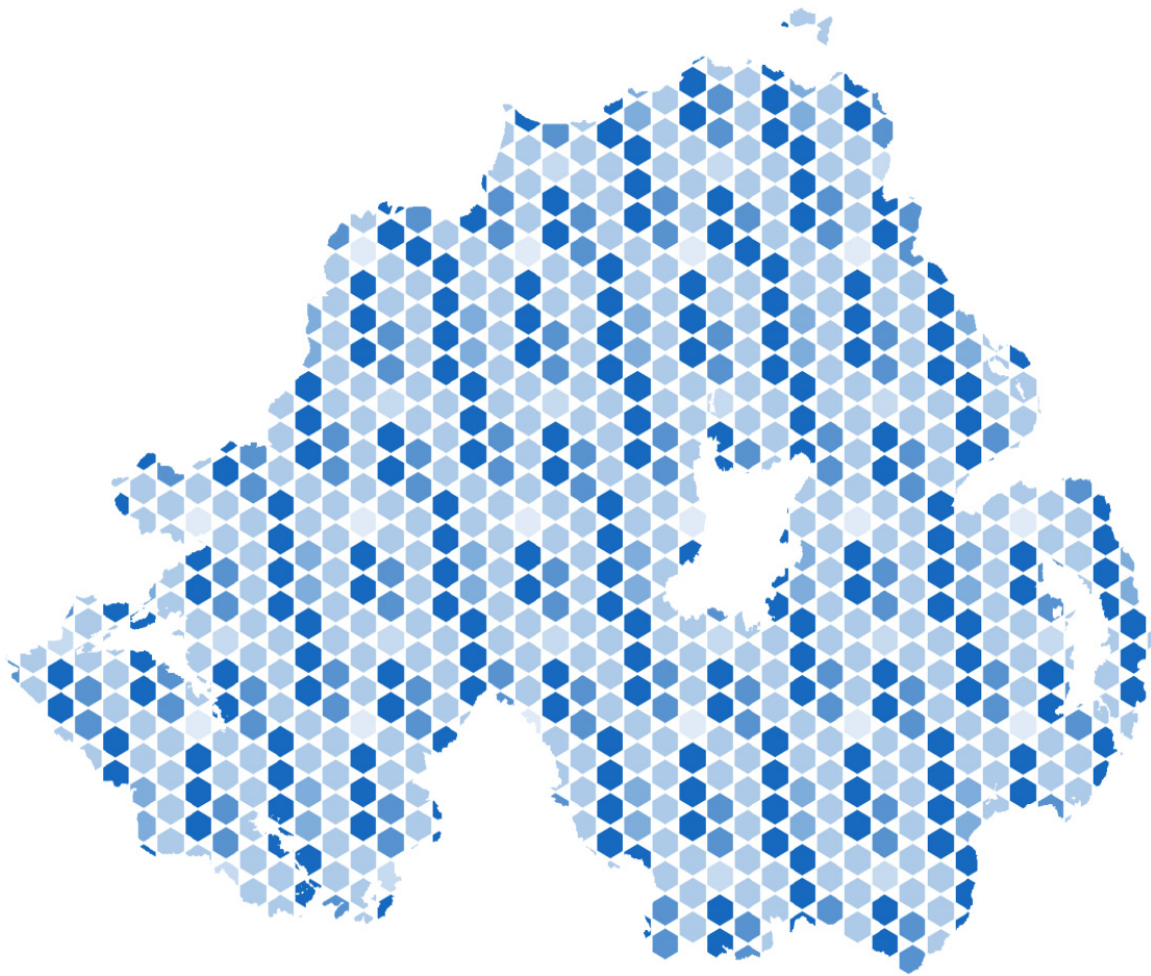


SPECIAL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Thornfield House School and
Outreach Services,
Newtownabbey

Report of an Inspection
in January 2012



Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



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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%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

STATISTICAL INFORMATION (SPECIAL SCHOOLS)

1.1 i. **School: Thornfield House School and Outreach Services** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 23/01/12**

ii. **School Reference Number: 331-6547** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

1.2

School Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Total Enrolment	91	91	94	85	89

The enrolment for the current year is the figure on the day of notification of inspection. For previous years it is the figure in the annual return to the Department of Education.

1.3 Number of Pupils in Outreach Programme: 92

1.4 Average Attendance for the Previous School Year: 90.5%

1.5 i. Number of Teachers in School: 24 on Outreach Programme: 11*
(including the Principal and p/t teachers)
(f/t equivalent = 25 teaching hours)

ii. PTR (pupil/teacher ratio): 9.1

iii. Average Class Size: 9

iv. Number of Classroom Assistants: 16**

v. Ancillary Support:
Number of Hours per week:

Clerical Support: 561***

vi. Percentage of children in receipt of free school meals: 29%

* 1 teacher works 3 days in school and 2 days for outreach service.

** 1 classroom assistant works for outreach service only.

*** This figure includes classroom assistants, clerical staff, building supervisor, supervisory staff and cleaning staff.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Thornfield House School and Outreach Services, situated in Jordanstown, County Antrim, provides education for pupils aged 4-16 years, who have a Specific Speech and Language Impairment. Enrolment over the last five years has remained steady at approximately 90 pupils. The school outreach service has expanded considerably over the last three years and is now staffed by eleven teachers.

2. KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

2.1 **In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is good.**

3. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

3.1 **Overall, the standards achieved by the pupils are very good.**

3.2 The strengths are:

- the well-motivated pupils who enjoy, and benefit from, their learning and their very good rapport with the staff;
- the significant progress the pupils make in developing their confidence and self-esteem and the good understanding they show of future pathways and opportunities;
- the very good progress the pupils make in communication, literacy and numeracy; approximately 25% of the pupils return to mainstream schools; and
- the good success achieved by the school leavers in gaining accreditation (Appendix 3).

4. PROVISION FOR LEARNING

4.1 **The quality of learning and teaching observed is very good**

4.2 The strengths are:

- the welcoming and inclusive ethos of the school and the high levels of commitment which the staff demonstrate to the care and well-being of the pupils;
- the very good quality of teaching with the majority of the 39 lessons observed evaluated as good or better and a minority as outstanding;
- the creative, enjoyable and practical lessons which interest and motivate the pupils who participate enthusiastically in the classroom activities;
- the imaginative and frequent use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning; and
- the very strong focus on language development enhanced by the very effective collaborative working with the speech and language therapists.

5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.1 The quality of the leadership and management of the school is satisfactory.

5.2 The strengths are:

- the commitment of the Governors and the Senior Management Team (SMT) to raising standards for all;
- the leadership and development of Outreach Services; and
- the very good arrangements in place for the safeguarding of children which reflect the guidance given by the Department of Education

5.3 The areas for improvement are:

- the need to improve the leadership and management approach to school development planning to ensure it is more effective and fully compliant with the requirements of the School Development Plan Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010; and
- the need to clarify the management structure to ensure it is more effectively focused on key areas for improvement.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in the area of leadership and management which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the organisation's progress on the areas for improvement.

EVIDENCE OF THE INSPECTION

The standard inspection of Thornfield School and Outreach Services focused on achievements and standards, learning and teaching, and on leadership and management across the school. The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation are available in the Inspectorate's publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self evaluation* at <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-post-primary.htm>

The inspectors paid particular attention to careers education (CEIAG), individual education plans, policies, links with parents and pupils' records and provided detailed oral feedback to the Principal and Vice-principal in these areas. In total, 39 lessons were inspected.

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents and the staff to complete confidential questionnaires prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and with two groups of the pupils. The inspection team met one group of pupils from the primary department and one group of the older pupils.

The Education and Training Inspectorate has reported to the Principal, and representatives of the governors, the findings from the questionnaires.

IEWS OF PUPILS, PARENTS, TEACHERS, SUPPORT STAFF AND GOVERNORS OF THE SCHOOL

QUESTIONNAIRES	ISSUED	RETURNED	ADDITIONAL COMMENT
PARENTS	85	44	14
TEACHERS		15	3
SUPPORT STAFF		18	3

A majority of the parental questionnaire responses were very positive and commented on the dedicated teachers, classroom assistants and therapy staff. The parents were appreciative of the strong pastoral concern shown by the staff and the warm and welcoming ethos which promotes the pupils' self esteem and confidence. A majority of parents indicated their satisfaction with their child's progress in their work and in particular with the improvements in language development. A minority of the parents raised concerns about the reduction in the number of speech therapy staff available to the school.

The governors acknowledged their strong support for the school and stated that they are very well informed about the work of the school. In particular, they praised the Principal and the staff for their commitment to the school.

Almost all of the teachers' and support staff responses were positive, indicating very strong support for the work and life of the school.

The pupils talked enthusiastically about their activities in school. They enjoy participating in the range of programmes, in particular, the older pupils spoke highly of their outdoor education residential experiences. The pupils leaving school this year have clear ideas about the training and career pathways which they wish to pursue. The pupils value highly their teachers and recognise the excellent care, guidance and support which they receive. They feel safe and secure in school and know where to seek help if concerned.

APPENDIX 3

DETAILS OF COURSES

Subject	Level	Examining Body	Year	Number entered	Number achieved Level 1	Number achieved Level 2	Number achieved Level 3
English	Entry Level	CEA	2009	5	0	0	5
			2010	0	0	0	0
			2011	2	0	1	1
Maths for Life	Entry Level	CEA	2009	5	0	0	5
			2010	0	0	0	0
			2011	2	0	0	2
ICT	Entry Level	CEA	2011	2	0	0	2
History	Entry Level	CEA	2009	5	0	0	3
			2010	0	0	0	0
			2011	2	0	0	2
Science	Entry Level	CEA	2009	5	0	0	5
			2010	0	0	0	0
			2011	2	0	0	2
Environmental Science	GCSE	AQA	2012	5			
Animal Care	BTEC Level 2	OCR	2013	5			
			2014	4			

Course	Year	Number Entered	Number achieved Entry Level	Number achieved Level 1	Number achieved Level 2
Design and Creativity	2009	1 Yr 12	0	1	0
	2010	2 Yr 11	0	0	2
Construction	2009	4 Yr 12	0	0	4
	2010	1 Yr 11	0	0	1
	2011	2 Yr 11	0	0	2
		2 Yr 12	0	0	2
Engineering	2011	3 Yr 11	0	0	3
		1 Yr 12	0	0	1

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