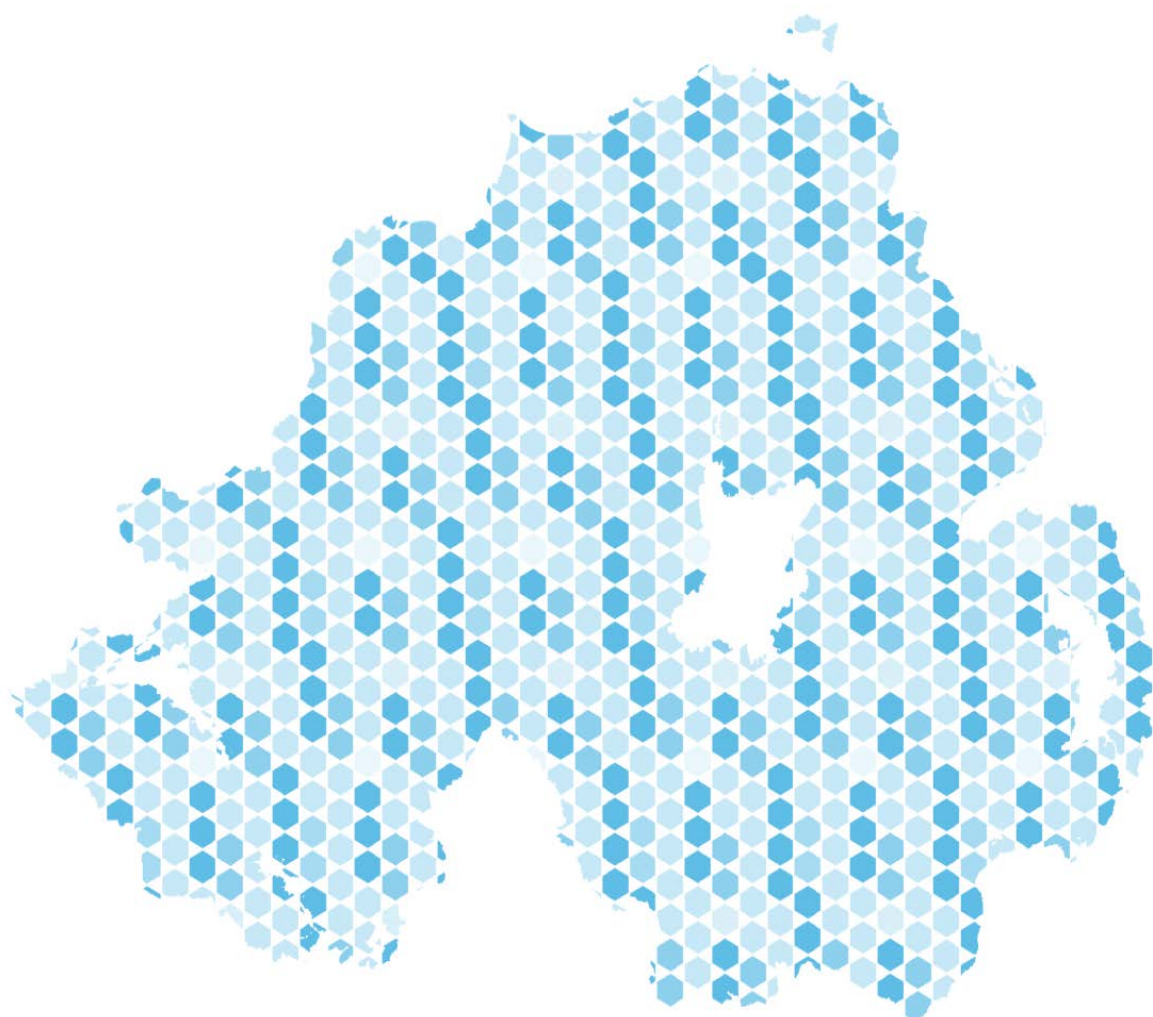


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Dickson Primary School and  
Nursery Unit, Lurgan

Report of an Inspection in  
June 2014

## 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 Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels in reports:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

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## 1. Inspection method and evidence base

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of primary schools, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the Education and Training Inspectorate's ( ETI) publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self-evaluation* at: <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-primary.htm>.

Inspectors observed teaching and learning, scrutinised documentation and the children's written work and held formal and informal discussions with children, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

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

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	181	10	5.5%	6
Teaching Staff	10	8	80%	8
Support Staff	18	*	*	*

\* fewer than 5

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) is trialling a range of methods for collecting the views of parents about the life and work of the school. As a result, the response rate to the parental questionnaire may be low.

The parental responses indicated that their children are happy in school and are well supported by the teachers. The teaching and support staff indicated high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the work of the school, including the positive and supportive working environment and the family and community atmosphere pervading the school. The governors expressed appreciation of, and support for, the work of all of the staff and outlined the important role that the school plays within the local community. The responses and the small number of concerns expressed in the questionnaires were discussed with the principal and the governors.

## 2. Context

Dickson Primary school is located in the town of Lurgan, County Armagh. The children are drawn mainly from the immediate surrounding vicinity. At the time of the inspection, approximately 44% of the children were entitled to receive free school meals and 33% of the children were identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning. The school leadership has undergone significant changes within the past academic year with the newly appointed principal and vice-principal taking up their posts within the past five months. There has been an increase in the number of teaching staff that are employed in a temporary capacity; consequently, the principal and board of governors have appropriately identified the need to consolidate the staffing.

Dickson Primary School	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Enrolment	167	177	179	173
% Attendance (NI Average)	94.7%	95.6%	94.6%	94.3%
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	32.9%	34.5%	42.4%	44%
% (No) of children on SEN register	35% (58)	22% (39)	30% (54)	33% (57)
No. of children with statements of educational needs	11	10	10	9
No. of newcomers	*	*	5	*

**Source:** data as held by the school.

\* fewer than 5

### 3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy, in particular, how the school is addressing low attainment and under-achievement where applicable;
- the quality of provision in the school and nursery unit; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

### 4. Overall finding

<b>Overall Performance Level</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Achievements and Standards</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Provision</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Leadership and Management</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Nursery Unit</b>	<b>Good</b>

### Key findings of the inspection

#### 5. Achievements and standards

- In the best practice, the children co-operate during group activities and use effectively their skills from previous learning to solve challenges that are set for them. The children's thinking skills and personal capabilities are developed well through good opportunities to engage in discussions where they argue confidently their viewpoint, listen to one another and offer differing opinions.

<sup>1</sup> The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

- An analysis of the end of key stage (KS) 2 data for the past four years<sup>2</sup> shows that the school's performance is below the Northern Ireland (NI) average in two out of the three years in English and in mathematics. Compared with schools in the same free school meals (FSM) category, the performance in English and mathematics is below the Northern Ireland (NI) average for two out of the three years. The school's internal performance data indicates that most of the children achieve in line with or above expectation in English and mathematics. Those children who require additional help with aspects of their learning make good progress in their English and mathematics and achieve in line with or above expectation. The staff have appropriately prioritised the need to raise further the children's standards in numeracy and literacy and they have begun to analyse performance data and interpret the results and evaluate learning and teaching to improve the quality of the children's learning experience.
- By the end of key stage (KS) 2, most of the children have good oral skills, their reading is developing well and they are writing in a variety of forms for different purposes. Most of the children have a good knowledge of mathematical operations and can demonstrate a number of strategies to solve mathematical problems.
- The children in the nursery unit are highly motivated; they talk well about their learning activities and experiences. They make very good use of the play areas and engage in lengthy periods of concentrated and purposeful play. The majority of the children show imagination and creativity in their play. They have a good understanding of early mathematical concepts; they sort, match and count and use appropriate mathematical language. The children's language development is enhanced well through a repertoire of songs and rhymes; the staff need to develop further the children's use and exploration of musical instruments.
- The children enjoy and make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) in a variety of settings; they have appropriate opportunities to create their own video stories, research information for topic work and make digital presentations.

## **6. Provision**

- The quality of the teaching ranged from outstanding to satisfactory; the majority of the lessons were good or better. In the most effective practice, the lessons were well planned, included a good range of activities with appropriate challenge to match the children's learning needs. The children built upon their prior learning and were able, through effective teacher questioning, to give extended responses. They reflected on, evaluated the extent of their learning, and were given effective opportunities to share their ideas and problem solving strategies with one another at the end of the lesson. In the less effective practice, there were fewer opportunities for the children to extend their thinking and develop further their problem solving abilities. The children engaged in activities that did not match their abilities, consequently, there were limited opportunities to build upon their knowledge, understanding and skills.

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<sup>2</sup> Due to the current transition period in the arrangements for statutory assessment, this analysis of the end of KS2 performance data is based on the outcomes up to but not including the 2012/13 school year.

- Across the classes, the children's talking and listening skills are well developed. They enjoy reading and, by the end of KS 2, they read a variety of texts with fluency and understanding and talk enthusiastically about their reading books. In the best practice, the teachers take good account of the children's own experiences and use these as opportunities for developing and widening the children's writing across the curriculum. There is a need for the staff to disseminate this good practice across all year groups to develop the integration of literacy to support learning across the curriculum. Most of the children present their written work well. At the end of KS1 and KS2, the children demonstrate a good grasp of the key concepts of the mathematics curriculum. The children's mathematics skills are developed well as they progress through the school; they are able to demonstrate flexibility in their reasoning and can offer alternative strategies while problem solving.
- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning benefit from the supportive and caring ethos of the school and the detailed knowledge of the learning support assistants and the teaching staff have of their educational and pastoral needs. Individual education plans are written and evaluated by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) in collaboration with the teachers. The children benefit from effective withdrawal sessions where they make good progress, showing increased self-confidence and enjoyment of learning. The progress of the children is assessed thoroughly by the SENCO using an appropriate range of diagnostic and assessment materials.
- The staff of the nursery unit have created an exciting learning environment for the children. There are attractive displays of the children's work and interesting learning activities that promote effectively their development. The high quality interactions between the staff and the children develop well the children's personal, social and emotional development, language and early mathematical and creative skills. Learning opportunities are well exploited, encouraging the children to explore and think about the outcomes of the activities and thereby extending their learning. The staff need to provide the children with access to a wider range of activities to develop further their concentration in the latter part of the session. The organisation of the day, including the dinner routine, needs to be reviewed by the staff to ensure that all of the time is used effectively to develop learning.
- The quality of the provision for pastoral care in the school is very good. The staff create a family ethos in the school which results in a supportive learning environment for the children. The children speak enthusiastically about the aspects of school life they enjoy; they value highly the support given by their teachers and the positive experiences in the classroom. The children have opportunities to contribute appropriately to the life and work of the school, through, for example, the active student council and the playground helpers. There is a good range of after-school activities which enrich the experiences of the children; the links and partnerships with the local community are positively influencing the life and work of the school. The Parent-Teacher-Association supports well the work of the school by providing additional curriculum resources and by encouraging parental participation to improve further the children's learning experiences.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The quality of the principal's leadership is very good. Since her appointment, she has developed a clear vision for the school, and is providing effective curricular and pastoral leadership; she is ably supported by the vice principal. Co-ordinating teams have recently been established and they are at an early stage of developing effective monitoring and evaluating processes to improve the standards of the children's work. In the best practice, the co-ordinators use internal data to inform planning; they monitor and evaluate effectively and thereby improve the quality of the provision, particularly for those children identified as underachieving. To improve further the provision in the school, there is a need for the co-ordinators to evaluate the quality of learning across all areas of the school.
- The school improvement process is at an early stage of development; the school development plan is not fully compliant with the Department of Education's (DE) School Development Plan 2010 regulations and lacks evaluation. There is a need for the leadership team to review the school development plan to ensure that it is informed fully by all available data and that there is more meaningful consultation with the children and their parents. The areas for development need to be prioritised and the action plans need to focus clearly on the actions which will bring continued improvement in the children's learning, and include thorough and systematic methods for evaluation.
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of the inspection, the parents, staff and school community can have a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are well informed about all aspects of the work of the school. They support well the leadership and are aware of the challenges and opportunities facing the school.
- The children report that they feel safe in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their well-being. The school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education (DE). However, the following areas need to be addressed:
  - to review and update the current school policies and procedures to reflect the DE statutory requirements and recommendations regarding safeguarding; and
  - to review the school access arrangements to ensure site security during the school day.

## **8. Conclusion**

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 which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor, through district inspection activity, the school's progress on the areas for improvement.



**Health and safety**

- The board of governors, principal and employing authority need to review the access arrangements to the school site.

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