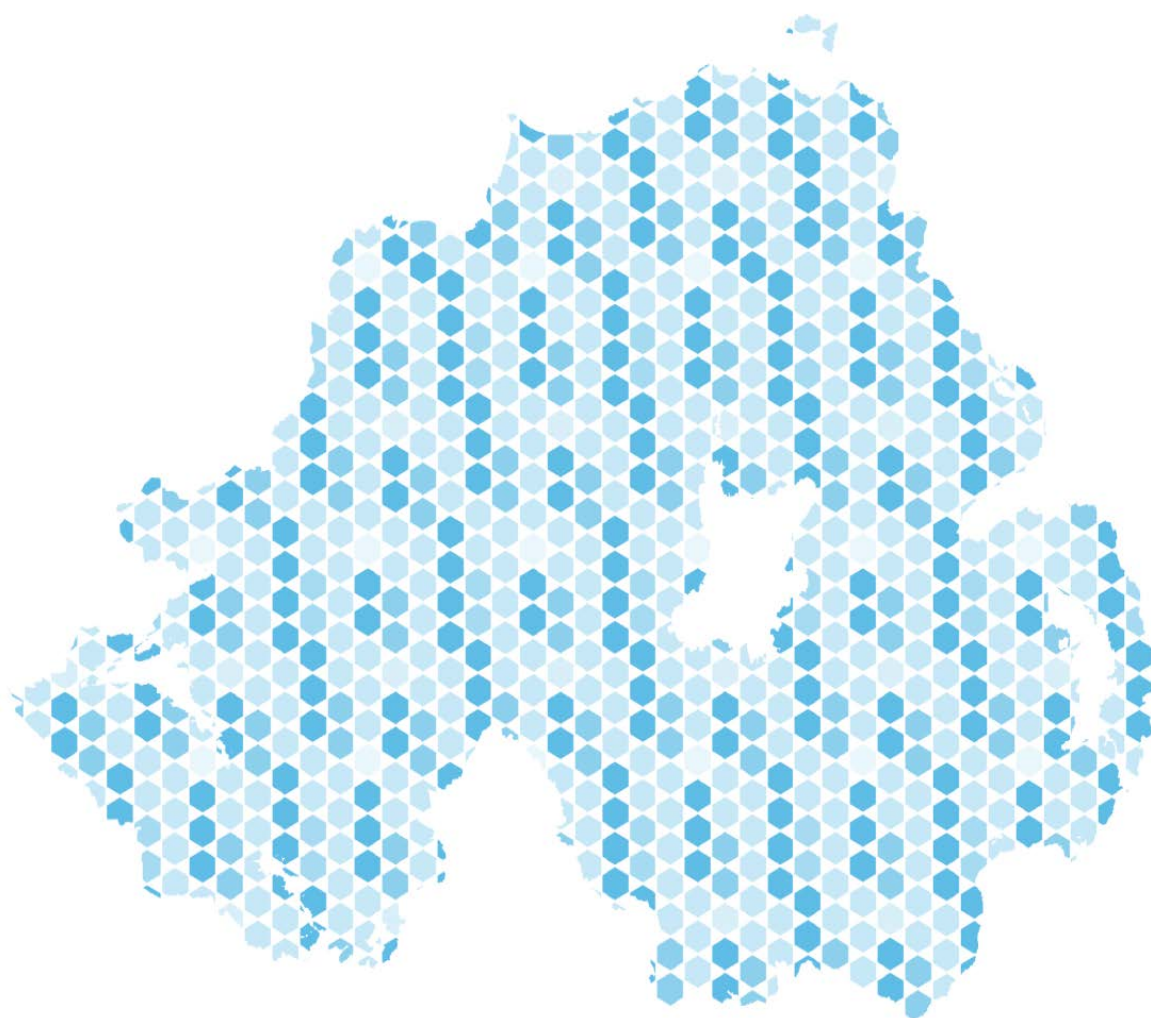


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Downshire Primary School and
Nursery unit, Hillsborough,
Co Down

Report of an Inspection in
January 2014

eti

*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*

Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



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

Contents

Section	Page
1. Inspection method and evidence base	1
2. Context	1
3. Focus of inspection	2
4. Overall finding	2
5. Achievements and standards	2
6. Provision	3
7. Leadership and management	5
8. Conclusion	6
Appendix	

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.eti.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 (total number in the school per category)	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents (Primary)	388	44	11%	27
Parents (Nursery)	53	*	7.5%	*
Teaching staff	24	12	50%	5
Support staff	36	8	*	*

* 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.

Almost all of the responses to the parental questionnaires indicated high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted the leadership of the principal, the caring and helpful staff, and the appropriate range of subject choices available for the children and the high regard held for the school in the local community. A minority raised concerns about some aspects of the provision. Almost all of the teachers, the teaching support and support staff questionnaires were very positive. An analysis of the questionnaires and all of the comments including concerns raised were shared with the principal and the governors.

2. Context

Downshire Primary School and Nursery Unit is located on the edge of Hillsborough village. Over the past four years, the enrolment has steadily increased and currently stands at 563 children in the school and 53 children in the nursery unit. The percentage of children entitled to receive free school meals has increased in the last four years and is currently 7%. Approximately 14% of the children have been identified by the primary school as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning and 26% by the nursery unit. The children attending come from a wide catchment area.

Downshire Primary School	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Enrolment	523	540	563	
Attendance	96.3	97	96.8	
FSME Percentage ¹	3.9	5.9	7.1	
% (No) of children on SEN register	21.5%	16.3%	15.6%	
No. of children with statements of educational needs	11	9	11	
No. of newcomers	*	*	*	

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 underachievement where applicable;
- the quality of provision in the school and nursery unit ; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

4. Overall finding

Overall Performance Level	Good
Achievements and Standards	Good
Provision	Good
Leadership and Management	Good
Nursery Unit	Very good

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children in the school are well-motivated learners and display good levels of independence and maturity. They respond positively to the learning opportunities provided by their teachers and their behaviour is exemplary. In most of the lessons observed, the children worked well individually, in pairs and in small groups.

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

- An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 performance data in three of the past four years shows that in English and mathematics, the school's performance is consistently above the Northern Ireland (NI) average.* Compared with schools in the same free school meals (FSM) category, the performance in English is in line with or above the average in two of the three years and the performance in mathematics is consistently below the average. The school's internal performance data shows that most of the children throughout key stage (KS) 2, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, are achieving standards in English and mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation.
- The children read with enjoyment, fluency and an increasing depth of understanding across the key stages. They use their vocabulary well to talk about their work and enjoy writing for a range of purposes. The children demonstrate a good understanding of number facts, numerical operations and key concepts across the area of mathematics. As they progress through the school, the children show increasing flexibility in their mathematical thinking: they are able to complete mental calculations accurately, drawing on a variety of strategies. They can explain confidently their chosen methods using appropriate mathematical language. However, a small number of the children in key stage (KS)1 and key stage (KS)2 are less secure in their understanding of aspects of shape and space and measures, such as length.
- The children in the nursery unit are well-settled and engage enthusiastically with their learning. The majority of the children play well collaboratively and have very good language and communication skills. The children have very good levels of independence and are confident in approaching the adults for help when needed.
- The children achieve good standards in their use of information and communication technology (ICT), including accreditation in year 7 through the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment. It is appropriate that the school has identified the need to develop further this good practice in using ICT to support the children's learning.

6. Provision

- The written planning is comprehensive and guides well the teaching and learning. The teachers evaluate their planning regularly; in the best practice, the evaluations are focused appropriately on the learning, take account of the children's individual responses and differing needs and are used well to inform future planning. This good practice needs to be more consistent across the school.

* 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.

- Almost all of the teaching observed was good or better with two-fifths very good or outstanding. In the most effective practice, the lessons were well structured, appropriately paced, linked to real-life contexts and built on previous learning. The differentiated activities were matched appropriately to the needs of all the children. In the less effective practice, the teachers' expectations were too low, there was an over-reliance on worksheets and there was insufficient challenge in the learning, especially for the more able children. The teachers are supported well in their work by the classroom assistants.
- The teachers' marking of the children's work is variable and is most effective when the children are given clear, legible guidance on how to improve their work. This good practice needs to be applied more consistently across all classes.
- The school gives a high priority to the teaching of reading and writing. The reading programme is systematic and the teachers use guided reading sessions effectively to develop the children's understanding. The programme for writing provides good opportunities for the children to write in a variety of styles. In the foundation stage, there are very good opportunities for the development of the children's talking and listening skills. Across KS 1 and KS 2, the teachers need to plan for more opportunities to develop the children's talking and listening skills through challenging activities to promote their thinking skills and personal capabilities.
- The whole school programme for mathematics is comprehensive and guides well the teachers' planning, ensuring systematic and progressive development of the children's mathematical language, skills and understanding. The teachers make effective use of a range of practical materials, games and strategies to engage the children's mathematical curiosity and to develop and consolidate their mathematical thinking. Strategies to promote mental calculation are incorporated well through planned sessions across the school and provide opportunities for the children to explain their strategies, using precise mathematical language. The numeracy co-ordinator has identified appropriately the need for the teachers to extend the challenge in these activities.
- The children receiving learning support benefit from the regular and effective individual and small group teaching based on very good working relationships and good exchange of information between the teachers and the children's families. In the helpful withdrawal and in-class sessions, there is clarity in the planning detailing how the work connects with the children's individual educational needs and class topics. In the best practice, the classroom teachers use effectively the detailed information provided by the special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) to guide classroom teaching, however, in a majority of lessons, the teachers need to improve differentiation in order to enhance further the learning of all the children.
- The nursery unit provides very good opportunities for learning across most of the areas of the pre-school curriculum. The adult interactions with the children are consistently of a high quality and develop well the children's oral language and listening skills, their understanding of early mathematical language and their personal, social and emotional development. The staff are skilled at promoting a sense of excitement and a spirit of enquiry within learning in the nursery unit. They set clear boundaries for behaviour that the children understand and respect.

- The quality of the provision for pastoral care in both the school and nursery unit is very good. All of the staff create a positive learning environment for the children in their care. Throughout the school, the children work very well together and have opportunities to contribute positively to the life and work of the school, through, for example, the active student council, the playground leaders and the Eco council.
- The school and the nursery unit give very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. A wide range of appropriate extra-curricular sporting activities and programmes are offered to encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership and management of the school are effective and committed to the holistic development of the children and to raising further the standards for them. The school development plan sets out a range of priorities for improvement with associated action plans and these should now be adjusted to reflect the inspection findings.
- There is effective co-ordination of key curriculum areas and a useful start has been made in using the available data to identify potential underachievement. The co-ordinators need to monitor and evaluate more closely the work of the children, their progress, and the effectiveness and impact of any intervention strategies designed to support and raise further the standards they attain.
- The nursery co-ordinator has created a strong team approach within the nursery unit and the foundation stage. There are very effective procedures for self-evaluation and appropriate areas for development have been identified.
- The school has a strong partnership with the parents and encourages them to play an active role in the education of their children and the work of the school. Effective arrangements are in place for communicating with the parents. The parent teacher association make a significant contribution to the life of the school and strong links have been established with the local and wider community that benefit the school.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school and nursery unit have comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. In discussions with the inspectors, the year 6 children reported that they feel secure in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their well-being.
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the parents, staff and school community can have confidence in most aspects of governance evaluated. It will be important for the governors to continue to support and work with the school in addressing the area for improvement identified in the report.

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 an area 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 area for improvement.

The area for improvement includes the need to:

- monitor and evaluate rigorously the quality of learning and teaching in the school in order to ensure more consistency in the teaching and raise further the standards in the children's learning.

Health and safety

- The major traffic congestion to the front of the school at the beginning and end of the school day presents a serious health and safety issue.

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