

# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Longtower Primary School and  
Nursery Unit, Derry

Report of an Inspection in  
January 2014

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*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

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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 Inspectorate's 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. Almost all of the responses to the parental questionnaires indicated that there were very high levels of satisfaction with the primary school and nursery unit overall. In the written responses, almost all of the parents reported that they value all aspects of the school's educational and pastoral provision and the highly committed and approachable staff. The comments in the questionnaires were shared with the principal and the governors.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	173	12	7%	7
Teaching staff	12	9	75%	5
Teaching support staff	9	8	89%	*
Support staff	10	9	90%	*

\* fewer than 5.

The ETI is trialling a range of methods to collect the views of parents/carers and, as a result, the response rate may be low.

## 2. Context

Longtower Primary School and Nursery Unit is situated close to the centre of Derry city. Most of the children attend from the Brandywell and Bogside areas. The current principal has been in post since December 2012. The school enrolment has reduced slightly over the past 4 years and is currently 245, including 27 children in the nursery unit. Approximately 64% of the children are entitled to free school meals and 25% require additional help with aspects of their learning.

Longtower Primary School and Nursery Unit	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Enrolment	254	254	244	245
% Attendance	93.1%	93.9%	93.4%	93.9%
FSME Percentage <sup>[1]</sup>	54%	58%	63.6%	64.2%
% (No) of children on SEN register	17%	24%	26%	25%
No. of children with statements of educational needs	7	7	5	7
No. of newcomers	3	2	-	1

**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,
- the quality of leadership and management.

### 4. Overall finding

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

### Key findings of the inspection

#### 5. Achievements and standards

- The children are extremely proud of their school and their achievements; their behaviour is excellent. They are highly motivated to learn, settle quickly and with a great sense of enjoyment in their lessons, and show consideration and respect for one another, their teachers and other adults. The children participate confidently in well-planned group activities which encourage them to extend and challenge their own and others' thinking, to develop a high level of collaborative skills, and to plan and manage important aspects of their learning.

- An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data, in three<sup>1</sup> of the past four years, shows that in English and mathematics, the school's performance has improved from slightly below to well above the Northern Ireland (NI) average. Compared with schools in the same free school meals category (FSM), the levels of attainment in English and mathematics are consistently well above the average in the same three years.
- The school's internal performance data shows that almost all of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make outstanding progress in English and mathematics and are achieving standards in line with their ability or above expectation. The children in the nursery unit are making very good progress in all aspects of their learning and development. From the earliest stage, the staff share high expectations in meeting the children's individual needs in order to develop their fullest potential.
- In all key stages, the children are developing well their abilities to talk and listen, read and write across the curriculum. By year 7, almost all of the children read fluently and can discuss important features of more challenging texts such as themes and use of language. The children write well for a wide variety of real purposes and audiences. As they progress through the school, they plan, draft, edit and evaluate their work independently and with their peers. As a result, the children have a deeper knowledge of the process and stages involved in writing their own poems, stories and various non-fiction pieces. Almost all of the children use appropriate mathematical language with great fluency and have an excellent understanding of key concepts and processes across the mathematics curriculum; this enables the children to apply their knowledge expertly to problem-solving and practical investigations. The children's mental mathematics strategies are developing effectively and support well their learning in mathematics. By the end of key stage (KS) 2, the children are highly flexible in their mathematical thinking and computation.
- Many of the children in the nursery unit show great interest in browsing books, early experimental writing and early mathematical concepts within a range of meaningful contexts. They spend sustained periods concentrating on tasks with confidence and are imaginative in their use of materials in the art area and during role play.
- The children's achievements and standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are well above the NI average as evidenced by their performance in the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) ICT Accreditation Scheme.

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<sup>1</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.

## 6. Provision for learning

- The quality of all of the learning and teaching observed was good or better, with almost all being very good or outstanding. The teachers have consistently high expectations for all of the children; they know and take close account of the children's individual needs. As a consequence, the teachers' skilful questioning and the tailored activities they provide within the lessons promote very well the children's levels of interest and engagement in their learning and offer appropriate challenge for all.
- From the earliest stage in the nursery unit, it is a consistent feature of the learning and teaching throughout the school that the children have frequent and well-planned opportunities to develop well their thinking skills in general, and their use of language and mathematical skills in particular. The children apply their learning purposefully across a broad, balanced and stimulating curriculum; the teachers place an effective and appropriate emphasis on developing connected learning through problem-solving and investigative activities set in real life contexts. Very good use is made of games, ICT and practical activities to consolidate and extend the children's knowledge.
- The planning takes very good account of the varying needs of all of the children and guides the learning well. The teachers' written and oral feedback supports and praises the children's efforts and also provides appropriate guidance to help the children make further improvements in their work. The children benefit from and respond well to the provision of good quality and age appropriate strategies for peer- and self-assessment. The inspection findings endorse the effectiveness of this very good practice.
- The school's provision for ICT is very good. The children make very good use of up- to- date hardware, including ICT tablets, and a wide range of carefully chosen learning software and programmes. There are appropriate plans to extend the provision further.
- The children who require additional help with aspects of their learning are supported and included very well in class by the teachers and the skilful classroom assistants. The education plans focus appropriately on the children's learning strengths; the thoughtfully formulated targets and associated teaching and learning strategies guide effectively the provision for the children and are used well to track their progress over time.
- The stimulating learning environment provided in the nursery unit promotes effectively the children's language development, decision-making and self-management skills. The excellent quality of the staff interactions with the children ensures that the opportunities for learning through the play, daily routines and group story sessions are exploited fully.

- Pastoral care in the school and the nursery unit is outstanding. The school motto, “*Our Children First*”, places the holistic development of each child at the centre of its purpose and is present in every aspect of the life and work of the school. The school and nursery unit create a positive and nurturing learning environment in which there are positive relationships at all levels and a strong sense of community is evident throughout. The children have very good opportunities to contribute to decision-making in the school, including for example, through the school council, and the eco council.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting a healthy lifestyle through the healthy break and lunch initiatives and through the wide range of physical activities on offer.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The principal and the school leadership team provide outstanding strategic leadership. Together with the skilled co-ordinators and dedicated staff team, their combined vision and the associated ethos for school improvement focus sharply on achieving the highest possible standards in learning and pastoral care and on extending cultural, sporting and personal development opportunities for all of the children. The findings of this inspection confirm that this vision is being achieved. The school fosters and sustains an extensive range of meaningful links with the local and wider community; these arrangements enhance and enrich the children’s learning and well-being.
- The current school development plan has involved suitable consultation with the staff, children, parents and governors and indicates appropriate areas for development. In the primary school and the nursery unit, the staff are highly reflective in their work; the processes for self-evaluation and continuous improvement are well-embedded and effective.
- Parents are valued as partners in promoting their children’s learning and are encouraged to participate in school events and programmes to support learning. Assessment of the children’s learning and development is thorough and detailed and parents are given information regularly about their children’s progress and all aspects of school life.
- The well-informed governors support the principal and staff very well in the implementation of the school development plan (SDP) and make a very positive contribution to the life and work of the school. Notable key features include the governors reviewing and challenging a range of evidence presented to them on the effectiveness of the school’s work. Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the parents, staff and school community can have a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. During the inspection, the inspectors met with a group of children from year 6 and 7. The children spoke with confidence and great pride about their experiences in school; for example, their work in the school and eco councils. They reported that they are very happy and feel safe in school and know who to speak to if they have any worries or concerns.



## **8. Conclusion**

In the areas inspected the quality of education provided by this school is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The school has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self improvement.

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