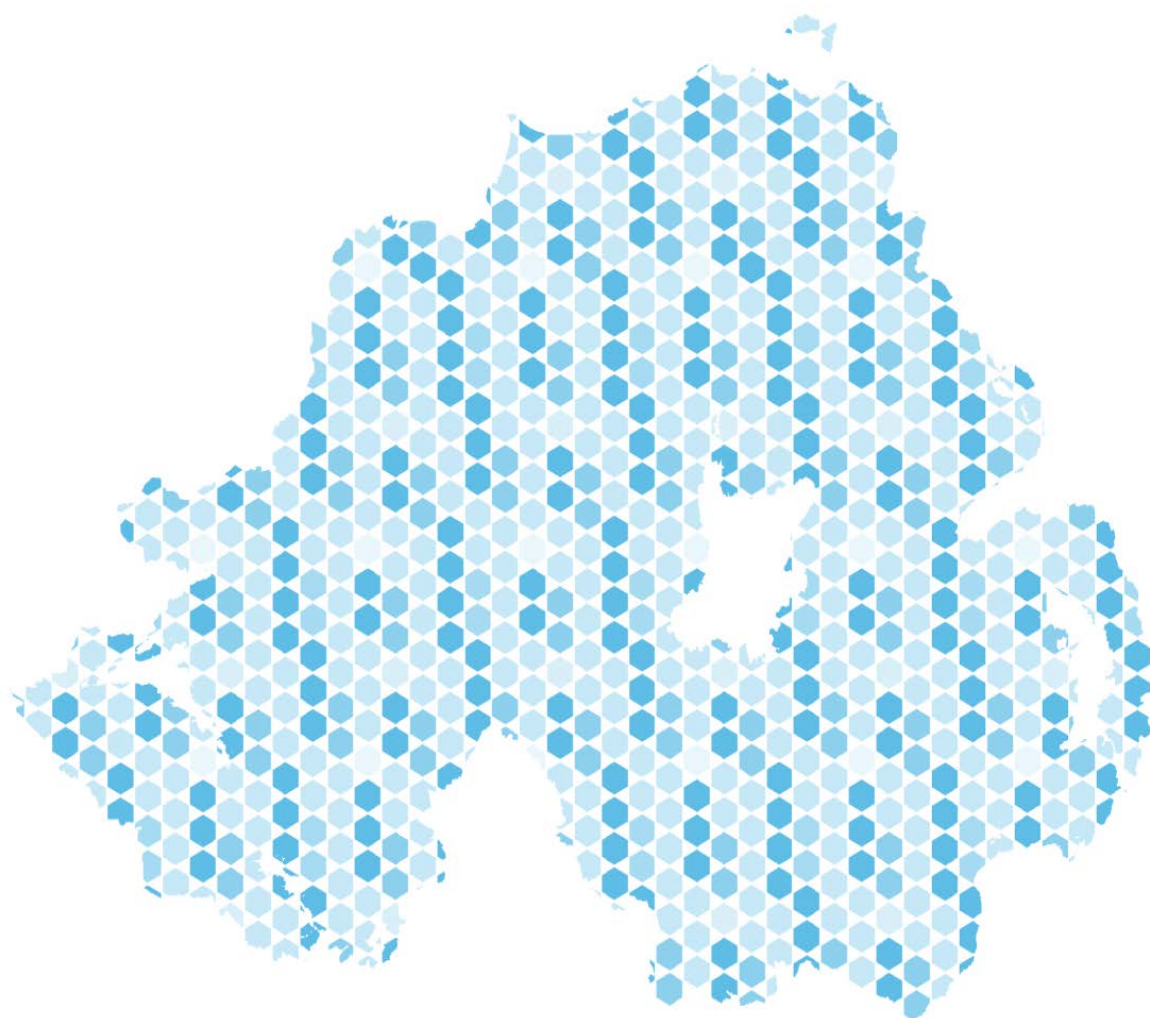


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Spires Integrated Primary
School, Magherafelt,
Co Londonderry

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

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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.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	152	20	13%	11
Teaching staff	9	9	100%	*
Support staff	15	7	47%	*

* 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 responses to the parental questionnaires indicated high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents' written responses emphasised their appreciation of the caring, family atmosphere and the dedicated and supportive staff. A small number of concerns raised in the written comments were discussed with the governors and the principal.

All of the teachers completed questionnaires and their responses were very positive; they emphasised their enjoyment of working as part of a supportive team.

In discussions with the governors, they expressed their appreciation for the hard work and dedication of the principal and staff and highlighted their work in developing links with other schools and the wider school community.

2. Context

Spires Integrated Primary school is situated on the Moneymore Road about one mile north of Magherafelt. All of the children attending the school come from Magherafelt and a wide surrounding rural area. The school enrolment has remained steady over the past two years and stands at 203 children. At the time of the inspection, approximately 24% of the children in the school were entitled to free school meals and around 22% of the children were identified by the school as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

Spires Integrated Primary School	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Enrolment	201	197	203	203
% Attendance	95.6%	95.9%	95.8%	97.3
FSME Percentage ¹	7.96%	13.7%	18.71%	23.64%
% (No) of children on SEN register	23.88%	23.35%	23.64	21.67
No. of children with statements of educational needs	*	*	6	5
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
- the quality of leadership and management.

4. Overall finding

Overall Performance Level	Good
Achievements and Standards	Good
Provision	Good
Leadership and Management	Good

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are courteous and well behaved; they engage readily with their peers and are respectful towards staff and visitors to the school. They settle quickly to their learning and respond positively to the activities provided by their teachers. The children work collaboratively in pairs and in groups; however, they need more opportunities to develop their thinking skills and personal capabilities and to manage aspects of their learning.

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 years² shows that the school's performance in mathematics is consistently in line with or above the Northern Ireland (NI) average and in English, it is above the Northern Ireland (NI) average in one of the three years. Compared with schools in the same free school meals (FSM) category, the performance in mathematics and English is below the average in two of the three years. The school's internal performance data in mathematics and English shows that most of the children are achieving standards in line with their ability or above expectation.
- By the end of year 7, the children show enthusiasm for reading and read with fluency and a good level of understanding. The most able children write imaginatively and at a good standard across an appropriate range of formats. In mathematics, the children show a high level of enjoyment and engagement in their mathematical tasks. By year 7, most of the children are secure in their understanding of number and place value and the most able children can apply their mathematical knowledge competently and, when encouraged, can draw on a range of strategies to complete accurately mental calculations.
- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning make good to very good progress commensurate with their abilities.
- The children's achievements and standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are very good. In the last three years, the children in years four and seven have been entered in the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) ICT Accreditation Scheme and have consistently achieved above the Northern Ireland average.

6. Provision

- The teachers use a common format for short and medium-term planning which encourages a uniformity of approach. It is important that the planning includes more reference to all the children's abilities and evaluates systematically the progression in their knowledge and understanding across the three key stages.
- The quality of the learning and teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to very good. Almost two-thirds of the teaching observed was good or better, in the remaining proportion there were areas for improvement. In the most effective practice, the learning and teaching is well structured, activities are well matched to the needs of the children and the teachers use skilful questioning to develop the children's thinking and to encourage more extended responses. Where the teaching was less effective, the teaching was overly directed by the teacher, had a slow pace and provided insufficient challenge to develop learning for all of the children.

² 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.

- The children's work is marked regularly and positively and there are appropriate procedures for keeping the parents informed about their children's progress. Throughout the school, assessment for learning strategies are at an early stage of development, a more systematic approach is required to ensure that feedback given to the children enables them to improve the quality of their work. In order to ensure greater consistency in the quality of learning in the children's experiences, it will be important for all the staff to develop a shared understanding of what constitutes high quality learning.
- The children who have difficulty with aspects of their learning are identified through a combination of teacher observation and formal and informal assessment. The special educational needs coordinator provides effective learning support during withdrawal sessions and more recently, in-class support. The targets for improvement on the individual education plans are currently of variable quality: they need to be more sharply focused and evident in the teachers' planning.
- The quality of the provision for pastoral care in the school is very good. This provision is characterised by the welcoming, child-centred ethos and the very good rapport between the staff and children. The school council provides the children with an opportunity to contribute to the decision-making processes within the school and the older children are encouraged to take on roles and responsibilities through, for example, the playground 'buddy' and peer mediation systems. In addition, the wide range of extra-curricular experiences provided enhances the quality of the children's overall learning experiences and contributes significantly to their personal development. The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy lifestyles through the curriculum topics and the good emphasis placed on healthy eating and the importance of physical exercise.

7. Leadership and management

- The principal, who is in her third year in post, displays very good strategic and pastoral leadership for the school, which is focused on achieving the highest possible standards for all of the children through caring and child-centred provision. She has introduced clear processes and procedures for self-evaluation at a whole school level and has led the very effective work on the use of internal performance data to identify priorities and future development work.
- The school has identified appropriately the need to develop further the role of the curriculum leaders within middle management. To support this development, it will be important to build their capacity to contribute to the school improvement process through more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the provision and the quality of the learning and teaching in their respective areas. The current action plans need to focus clearly on the actions which will bring about continued improvement in the children's learning and to include more informed first-hand evidence to demonstrate the impact of action and the progress being made.

- There are effective arrangements in place for communicating and consulting with parents to involve them appropriately in their children's education and the ongoing development of the school, for example, through the monthly newsletters and the informative school website. To enhance further the learning opportunities for the children, the school has established very good links with a range of other schools, the local community and with various external support agencies.
- 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. The governors are very well informed about the school and carry out effectively their support and challenge functions.
- 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. In discussions with the inspectors, the year 6 children talked with enthusiasm about their school. In particular, they emphasised that all of the teachers are helpful and approachable and, that the peer mediation programme is a positive feature in the school. The children reported that they feel secure in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their well-being.

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. This is the need:

- to develop further the role of the curriculum leaders in leading, monitoring and evaluating the provision more rigorously in their respective areas.

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

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