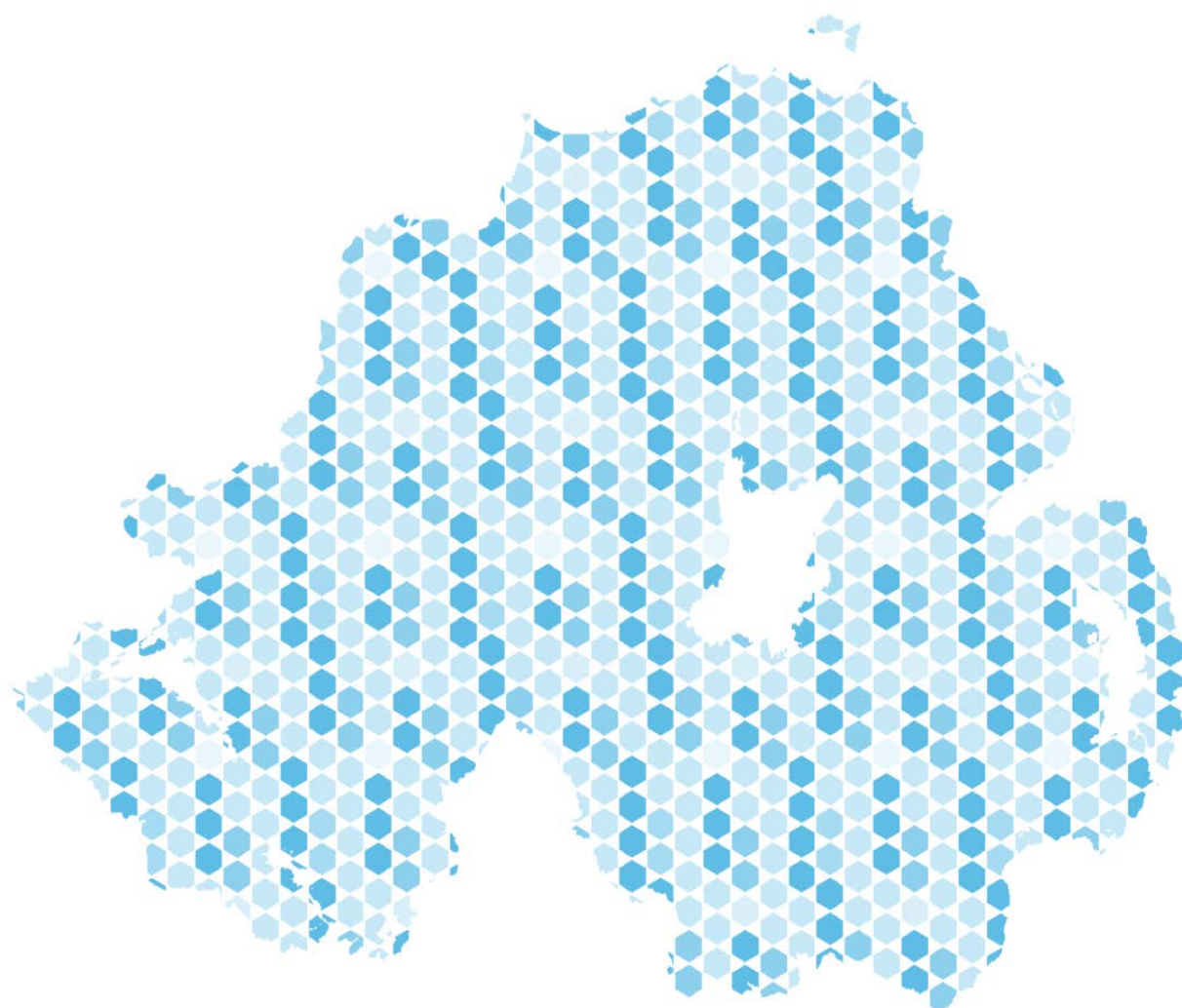


PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Strabane Controlled Primary
School and Nursery Unit,
Co Tyrone

Report of an Inspection in
February 2015

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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 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.

Eleven percent of the parents responded to the parental questionnaires with almost all of their responses indicating high levels of satisfaction with most aspects of the life and work of the school. The parents praised the hardworking and approachable staff and the good progress their children were making in their learning and all-round development. Most of the staff (teaching and non-teaching) completed questionnaires and their responses were mostly positive. In discussions with the governors, they expressed their appreciation of the dedicated efforts of the principal and staff in improving the school's provision. ETI reported to the principal and representatives of the board of governors the main findings and any significant issues emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

2. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

1. the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy, in particular, how the school is addressing low attainment and underachievement where applicable;
2. the quality of provision for literacy and numeracy in the school; and
3. the quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

Strabane Primary School and Nursery Unit is situated on the Derry Road, on the northern outskirts of Strabane. The enrolment of the primary school has been rising gradually and is now 246 with a further 26 children in the nursery unit. The children come from the local urban and wider rural area. At the time of the inspection, approximately 38% of the children were entitled to free school meals (FSM) and the school had identified 22% of the children as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning. The school prides itself on its inclusive ethos and shared education has been a distinctive feature of the provision for many years.

Strabane Primary School and Nursery Unit	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	232	232	238	246
% Attendance (NI Average)	95.94%	94.73%	95.89%	-
FSME Percentage ¹	28.0%	28.0%	31.0%	38.0%
% (No) of children on SEN register	22.48%	24.24%	23.1%	21.93%
No. of children with statements of educational needs	*	*	5	5
No. of newcomers	0	*	*	*

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

4. Overall findings of the inspection

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

5. Achievements and standards

- From the earliest stage, the children are mutually supportive, articulate in their interactions and have a very positive attitude to their learning. Almost all settle quickly to the varied and engaging activities provided by their teachers. They display very good teamwork skills and respond eagerly and confidently when the planned tasks contain high levels of challenge to extend their thinking. The children in the nursery unit are very well-settled in their chosen activities and co-operate well with one another.
- The school's internal performance data shows that in key stage (KS) 2, almost all of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, are achieving in line with their ability or above expectation in English and that most of the children are achieving in line with their ability or above expectation in mathematics. By year 7, almost all of the children are making very good progress, with the most able children achieving outstanding standards in English, mathematics and ICT.
- Throughout the school, including in the nursery unit, most of the children express and explain their thinking with clarity and precision using the appropriate vocabulary. The year 7 children read fluently, discuss maturely the work of a wide range of authors and show high levels of understanding of increasingly challenging fiction and non-fiction texts. Many of the children in the nursery unit engage in early mark making and a few children attempt to write their own names. As they progress through the school, the children produce writing of a high quality across all areas of the curriculum and for a variety of audiences; overall, the children's writing and reading are notable strengths in the school.

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

- In the nursery unit, many of the children engage readily in sorting, matching and counting as they explore the play materials. As they progress through the key stages, the children gain a thorough understanding of key concepts across the mathematics curriculum. In the best practice, they work competently in more challenging problem-solving and practical investigations which extend their mathematical proficiency and flexibility. The children benefit from frequent opportunities to apply their mathematical skills and knowledge in meaningful ways across the curriculum. Their mental mathematics strategies are developing progressively and support well their learning and thinking in mathematics.
- In the nursery unit, nearly all of the children engage in purposeful, concentrated play; they co-operate well with one another. All of the children are very attentive during the whole group story and rhyme session; they join in appropriately which contributes to their enjoyment of the session.
- The children are highly skilled in their use of a carefully selected range of information and communication technology (ICT) devices and software to support and extend their literacy and numeracy and other aspects of their learning.

6. Provision

- In the most effective practice, in most of the lessons observed, the learning activities contained excellent stimuli, challenge and progression and the teachers took ongoing account of the children's needs and responses. The teachers used highly effective open-ended questioning to extend the children's thinking about more complex curricular concepts and ideas; this very skilled practice deepened the children's understanding and enabled them to produce well-reasoned, expanded responses.
- Appropriately, the teachers are developing further the medium-term planning to outline more clearly the progression in the children's thinking skills and personal capabilities. Overall, the planning is informed increasingly well by the teachers' evaluations of the children's learning together with their effective use of the assessment information. The teachers mark the children's work regularly and positively and, in the best practice, indicate clearly how the children can improve the quality of their work. The school has identified appropriately the need to implement more consistently agreed assessment for learning strategies and to disseminate further the best practice within the school.
- The staff's learning and teaching approaches to the development of the children's literacy skills are coherent and enable progression across the key stages in talking and listening, reading and writing. The quality of the teaching contributes directly to the children's high levels of achievement. The very effective nursery unit provision and play-based learning in the foundation stage provide valuable opportunities for the children to develop well their early literacy and numeracy skills. The quality and presentation of the children's written work is given a high priority across the key stages; the staff celebrate and share the wide variety of the children's extended writing in displays and writing collections.

- The children experience a well-balanced mathematics programme. The teachers and classroom assistants place an appropriate focus on asking the children to explain and justify their mathematical reasoning. In the best practice, the children are provided with realistically challenging tasks which clarify and extend further their mathematical thinking. As a result, the children have a positive disposition to mathematics and are developing an awareness of its applications in everyday life, including the world of work.
- The nursery unit's playroom is stimulating and all areas of play are attractively presented to the children. The activities and resources available to the children are of a good quality and the children's work is valued and presented around the playroom. The staff are skilful in their interactions with the children; they often introduce mathematical concepts and ideas naturally through the play.
- The provision for children who require additional support with aspects of their learning is given a high priority by all of the staff. The children are identified early and are supported very skilfully during in-class and in withdrawal sessions; their progress is monitored and evaluated carefully to ensure progression. Alongside this provision, the whole-school pastoral focus is highly inclusive and directed at meeting the children's emotional and learning needs. The classroom assistants make a valuable contribution to the children's learning and well-being. It is appropriate that the school is reviewing currently the effectiveness of the format and content of the individual education plans.
- The quality of the provision for pastoral care is very good. From the earliest stage, the staff respect the children's opinions and are committed to involving the children in discussions and decisions that affect them directly, including through the active school- and Eco- councils. The children benefit from a wide range of educational, cultural, musical and sporting activities, which contribute greatly to their all-round development. Their various achievements are celebrated regularly and the children respond well to the school's carefully-planned reward systems.
- The school promotes very well healthy eating and physical activity through the healthy fruit break two days a week and the extra-curricular activities and curriculum programmes, including swimming, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership and management team has a strategic vision for school improvement and is focused clearly on securing the highest possible standards in learning, teaching and pastoral care. The principal is a highly effective role model for the development of collegial leadership across the school; he leads by example, understands the school's context in the local community and holds appropriately high expectations for all of the children and staff.
- Appropriately, the school is continuing to consolidate and extend the processes for self-evaluation and consultation. The co-ordinators identify and agree areas for development through careful scrutiny of the school's performance data, the children's work and the teachers' planners. As a result, the action plans concentrate on improving further the quality of the children's learning experiences and the standards that they attain. In taking this effective work forward, the co-ordinators need to consider more first-hand evidence to justify and evaluate the impact of the actions for improvement.

- There are appropriate arrangements in place for communicating with parents to involve them in their children's education. The school has established extensive working links with a range of other schools, the local community and with various external support agencies to enhance further the children's learning opportunities.
- The governors are caring and conscientious in their roles and understand the challenges and opportunities facing the school. Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. There are aspects of governance to review; specifically, for the governors to extend the processes for consultation with the parents and, while there is currently no evidence that class size is having a negative impact on standards, to keep under regular review the impact of the larger class sizes on the quality of the provision and the staff's well-being and workload.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the primary school and the 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 safe and secure in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the primary school and nursery unit is very good. The primary school and nursery unit are meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children; and have demonstrated the capacity for sustained self-improvement.

Health and safety

1. The employing authority and board of governors need to address urgently the lack of a secure front perimeter fence to the school and parking facilities that enable the children to access safely the school grounds at drop-off and collection times.

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