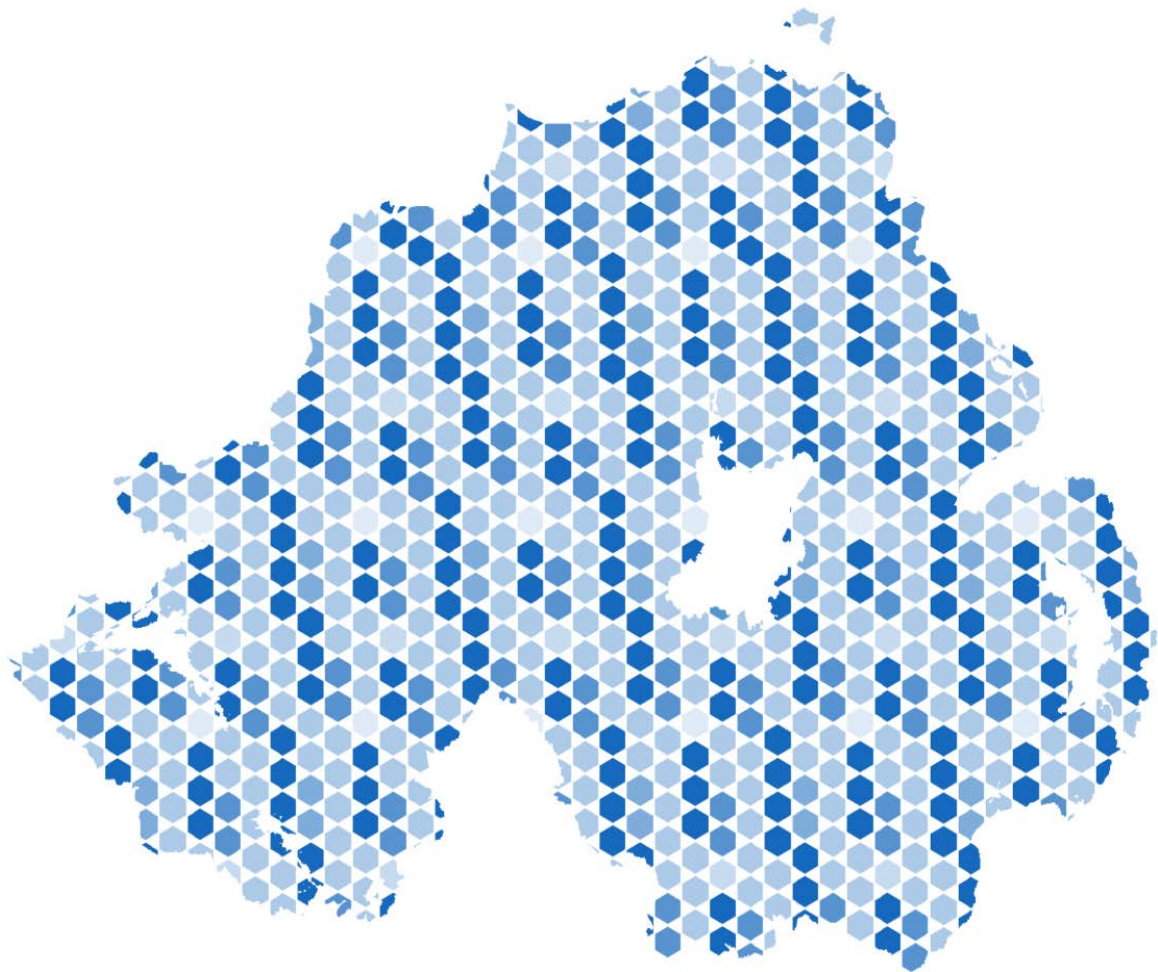


SPECIAL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Park School and Education
Resource Centre

Report of an Inspection in
November 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

Inspectors observed teaching and learning, scrutinised documentation and the pupils' 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 a representative 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 returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	6	5%	*
Teachers	7	37%	*
Support Staff	16	69%	*

* refers to a number less than 5

The ETI is trialling a range of methods for collecting the views of parents/carers about the life and work of the school. As a result, the response rate to the parent/carer questionnaires may be low.

Almost all of the parental questionnaire responses are positive. The parents value the progress made by their children and the positive ethos throughout the school. The small number of concerns were discussed with the chairperson of the board of governors and with the Principal. The teacher and support staff questionnaire responses were positive, and indicate support for the Principal and the work of the school.

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of special 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-special.htm>.

2. Context

Park School and Educational Resource Centre provides education for 123 pupils, aged eleven to nineteen years, with moderate or complex learning difficulties. The school is situated in the Ravenhill area of Belfast with the majority of pupils from the Belfast area and a small minority from the South Eastern Education and Library Board. The recently appointed principal began work in the school in September 2014. The school provides outreach support for literacy and numeracy to 82 pupils across five post-primary schools within the Belfast Education and Library Board.

Park School and Educational Resource Centre	20011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	130	131	129	123
% Attendance	89.6%	88.5%	86.4%	86.7%
Teachers	17	18	19	21
Classroom assistants	14	16	21	25
FSME Percentage ^[1]	58%	66%	60%	62%
No. of newcomers	*	*	*	*

Source: data as held by the school.

*refers to a number less than 5

3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the pupils' achievements and outcomes;
- the quality of provision in the school; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

4. Overall findings

Overall Performance Level	Inadequate
Achievements and Outcomes	Inadequate
Provision	Inadequate
Leadership and Management	Inadequate

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and outcomes

- Almost all of the pupils demonstrate positive attitudes and dispositions and are well behaved. Their personal skills develop well by the time they leave the school, however good communication skills and confidence are not evident amongst the younger pupils.
- The pupils are proud of their achievements. Their literacy skills develop well by the time they enter key stage 4. The pupils' written work and project portfolios are well-organised and of a good standard.
- Most of the pupils engage well with learning, particularly where the pace of the lesson is appropriate, there is effective differentiation and the activities are enjoyable. They interact well with each other. The pupils enjoy working with information and communication technology (ICT), which, when incorporated well into lessons, supports and enhances their learning.

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

- The pupils are well supported during transition, at present by, experienced staff; however, the school does not have in place a detailed transition programme that has been designed around the needs and aspirations of the pupils.
- The pupils achieve a range of accreditation; however, they are not achieving their full potential as staff expectations are too low and the programme for careers education, information, advice and guidance lacks structure and coherence.
- The pupils take on roles and responsibilities within the school; for example, they develop a variety of skills, including empathy and co-operation, through prefect duties.

6. Provision

- The staff need to agree and develop collectively a whole school approach for planning and teaching. Planning across the school varies; it is mostly inadequate and not well enough considered to inform teaching and to impact on learning. At its best, in a small minority of instances, planning is highly developed and supports effective teaching leading to good outcomes for the pupils.
- The personal learning plans (PLP) used by the school for pupils' individual targets, are at an early stage of development; all teachers should be involved in writing these and they should include the pupils in individual target setting, based on their needs. The pupils are currently not aware of their learning targets. In a significant number of lessons observed, there was insufficient challenge, a lack of productive use of the time available and a lack of differentiated strategies for learning.
- The teaching observed varied greatly in quality and consequently, for the majority of pupils, had a negative impact on their learning. There was a restricted range of strategies and resources used during approximately half of the lessons observed; where practical and meaningful activities were provided, the pupils were engaged, interested and motivated. Capacity building for staff has been given a high priority with extensive training provided to meet the changing profile of the pupils; all staff need to review their practice to incorporate additional specialist strategies for learning, particularly for the pupils with autism and for those with difficulties managing their behaviour.
- The learning experiences provided for the pupils are of variable quality with a lack of planned opportunities for paired and small group work thereby inhibiting the development of communication, co-operation and social skills amongst the pupils. More needs to be done to connect the pupils' learning across the curriculum and ensure cohesive future planning and practice. There is a need to develop a more effective teamwork approach to monitoring the effectiveness of the strategies in use across classrooms, through observation of the practice.
- The children enjoy their learning in literacy. During the inspection, individual children read with good fluency and understanding of texts and talked meaningfully about their written work. They engage willingly in the lesson activities and respond well to the teachers' effective encouragement and questioning; however, data indicates that standards need to be improved. Individual planning for literacy varies and is best when it is comprehensive and

used purposefully to guide the teaching for differentiated learning. Aspects of the leadership and management of the literacy programme are well-established and effective and include regular shared discussion, agreement about resources and strategies and the introduction of personal learning programmes for pupils.

- The provision for mathematics requires urgently the appointment of a permanent co-ordinator to develop and support mathematics throughout the school. In the most effective lessons observed, planning is well matched to the ability of the pupils and related to the key stage mathematics scheme; there are careful evaluations of pupils' progress and homework is marked with diligence and comments to help pupils to improve their work. The teachers need to share this good practice and ensure a consistency of approach. The vice-principal has recently undertaken the role of mathematics co-ordinator on a temporary basis and in her short time in post has carried out a number of useful audits to identify a strategy for improving the provision, including the need to develop mental maths throughout the school.
- The arrangements for outreach provision require the mainstream schools to take responsibility for the content of the intervention programme for each pupil and to place emphasis on ensuring that the pupils consolidate the basic skills for literacy and numeracy. The quality of the support is good; the pupils benefit from the individual support and can articulate their learning and how this helps their classroom work. However, it would improve the provision if consideration was given to the outreach teachers introducing observation of the pupils in their classroom setting to provide a clear picture of their performance as learners and to evaluate how they are applying their learning throughout the programme. The provision could also benefit from greater use of ICT to make the activities more age-appropriate and motivating. The intervention plans should be reviewed and developed so that more diagnostic information informs staff in the school how pupils learn and what teaching strategies are more likely to effect improvement and raise standards.
- The quality of the provision for pastoral care in the school is good. Amongst the strengths of the school's provision are the friendly, well-behaved pupils, the good working relationships between the staff and the pupils, the celebration of the pupil's work in displays throughout the school and the varied range of activities and experiences available for the pupils throughout the year. In order to meet the needs of all the pupils more effectively, the school needs to take more account of the different learning styles of the pupils and provide more differentiation in the work and challenge for the more able pupils in the planned lessons.
- The school promotes healthy breaks and provides regular opportunities for the pupils to engage in energetic physical activity, which encourages them to adopt healthy lifestyles. There is limited outdoor space for the pupils, restricting sporting and leisure activities.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding pupils. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. During the inspection, the inspectors met with two separate groups of pupils. In discussions, the pupils spoke highly of their teachers and classroom assistants and the varied range of subjects and activities which they enjoy. The pupils stated that they feel safe and cared for in school and are aware of what to do if they have any worries about their safety or well-being.

7. Leadership and management

- The principal has a clear strategic vision that has been discussed with staff and governors; however, the way forward for the school has not yet been agreed by all staff and should be addressed urgently. It is imperative that all members of staff support the learning needs of the pupils through the implementation of necessary changes as agreed with the board of governors; currently, progress towards an educational environment more suited to the learning and social needs of the pupils is impeded. The curriculum should be evaluated by the staff to ensure that the practical and vocational learning and accreditation are matched to the pupil's needs.
- The roles of co-ordinators and the senior leadership team have been rationalised by the principal and discussed with staff. Whilst there is some effective practice, most of the co-ordinators are not fulfilling their roles in an effective manner and, as a consequence, arrangements to ensure cohesive practice across classes are less than satisfactory. The governors and principal should ensure that clear accountability structures are in place and regularly evaluated.
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the parents, staff and school community can have confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated; the board of governors are very well informed about the life and work of the school. They provide excellent support for the principal and are effective in their challenge function regarding the quality of provision for the pupils. The chairperson expressed significant concern regarding the need to improve educational outcomes through better team-working by all staff.
- The current school development plan targets have been prioritised and associated action plans are in place; staff should evaluate these rigorously. The principal has begun to audit the school community in preparation for the new school development planning cycle. The processes for the self-evaluation of learning and teaching and of setting targets for improvement by the teachers are inadequate and need to improve. All staff should contribute constructively to the development of the school development plan and work collaboratively to achieve the targets identified.

8. Conclusion

In almost all of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is inadequate; the areas for improvement outweigh the strengths in the provision. The inspection has identified significant areas for improvement in outcomes, learning and teaching, and leadership and management, which need to be addressed urgently if the school is to meet effectively the needs of all of the learners. The areas for improvement include the need to:

- agree the strategic development priorities for the school and establish effective co-ordination for the curriculum;
- review and improve the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the learning experiences and outcomes for the pupils; and
- to provide consistently effective teaching in all classes throughout the school.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-18 month period.

Accommodation

- There have been significant improvements to the fabric of the school buildings in recent years but some areas require further painting and decoration.
- The school car park is inadequate for the number of users currently on site.
- The management should consider how technical support can be provided for the technology and science departments.

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