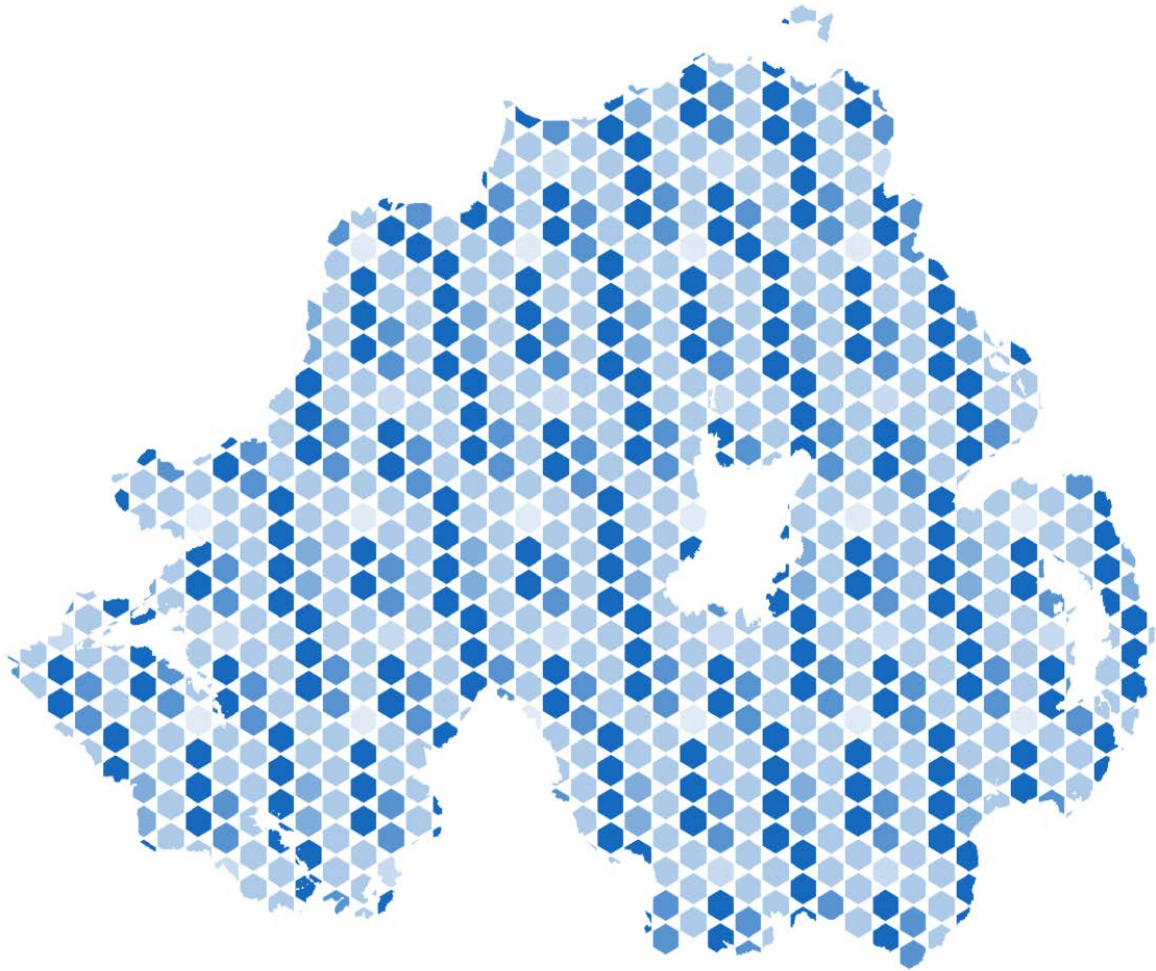


SPECIAL SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Oakwood School and Assessment
Centre, Belfast

Report of a Follow-up Inspection
in October 2018



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

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FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF OAKWOOD SCHOOL AND ASSESSMENT CENTRE, BELFAST, BT9 6TX (131-6582)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out an inspection of Oakwood School and Assessment Centre in October 2016,¹ which concluded that the school needed to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners:

- review the balance of the curriculum provision to improve the learning opportunities for the children and facilitate more effectively the transition to their next stage of education;
- implement rigorous planning and assessment processes, with robust systems of monitoring and evaluation at all levels to improve further the progression and outcomes for the children; and
- articulate clearly the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders and co-ordinators to build their capacity to identify school priorities, and actions to effect improvement.

As a consequence, the Department of Education entered the school into the Formal Intervention Process under the Every School a Good School policy in October 2016.²

The school's action plans were adjusted appropriately in light of the feedback given by the ETI. The school's development plan was adjusted in light of the inspection findings.

The ETI carried out an interim follow-up visit in January 2018 and a follow-up inspection in October 2018.

In the interval since the initial inspection, the school has received external support provided by the Education Authority in relation to: leadership and numeracy.

During this period, other actions or changes which affect the work of the school have taken place;

- a new approach to track pupil progress against targets in the individual education plans has been introduced;
- teams have been established for the curriculum, including planning and assessment;
- communication with referring schools has been developed further and includes information on the children's transition experiences;
- termly learning walks have been introduced with the senior leadership team sharing their findings with staff;
- a trusted colleague network has been implemented in the school;
- outdoor learning areas have been developed; and
- new learning resources have been provided for the children.

¹ <https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/special-school-inspection-oakwood-school-and-assessment-centre-belfast-131-6582.pdf>

² <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/every-school-good-school-policy-school-improvement>

Key Findings

The outcomes for learners remains good. The transition arrangements for the next stage of education are developing well and wider links should be explored to enhance the curriculum experiences for the children. There has been an increased variety of learning resources, particularly in outdoor learning, but further integration across the curriculum and monitoring of the learning experiences is required. The children's awareness and use of a range of communication aids is developing and it is timely that further training has been planned in this area. A system to monitor progress in the children's Individual Education Plans has been introduced and further evaluation is required to ensure that the individual targets are appropriate and inform further individual progress.

The quality of the provision continues to require significant improvement. A review of assessment systems has been completed and staff are piloting a system to meet the needs of their children. It is important that this is developed further to inform the planning at all levels. The approach to lesson planning is now consistent throughout the school, however further work is required in: using the assessment information to inform further the planning for individual needs and progression, including learning and teaching strategies; and more regular evaluations which inform more fully the next stage of learning. While systems for monitoring and evaluating have been initiated, the process needs to be more fully integrated to include middle leaders in the self-evaluation process.

The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and action to promote improvement continues to require significant improvement. The senior leadership team has begun to work more collegially to identify school improvement priorities, however further work is now required to include; a more strategic approach to improvement which builds the capacity of leaders at all levels; identify and evaluate the effectiveness of planned actions and their impact on the provision and the children's outcomes; and further opportunities for the middle leaders to identify and disseminate best practice throughout the school.

Overall Effectiveness

Oakwood School needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. It requires external support to do so. The follow-up inspection has identified the following areas for improvement:

- develop more robust and comprehensive systems of monitoring and evaluating of the planning and assessment at all levels to improve the provision and further improve outcomes for the children; and
- continue to provide professional development opportunities for the middle leaders and senior management to enable the development of effective leadership skills, disseminate effective practice, and to monitor and evaluate the impact of the planned actions to effect improvement.

Further action will be considered by the Department of Education.

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