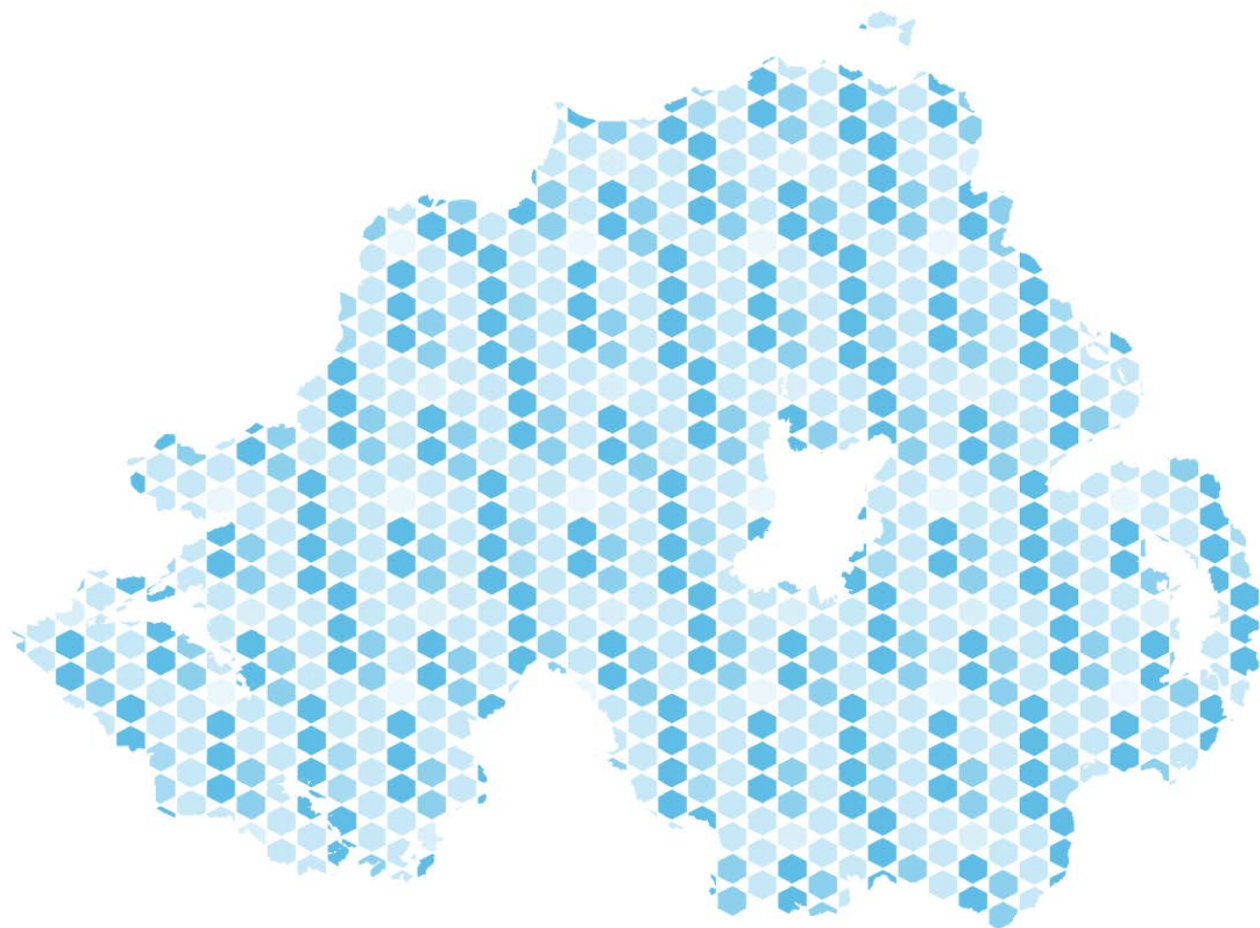


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St James's Primary School and  
Nursery Unit, Newtownabbey,  
County Antrim

Report of an Inspection in  
February 2016

*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 used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

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 when reporting on Achievement and standards, on Provision for learning and on Leadership and management:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

## Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the school:

The school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The 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 ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

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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 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 learning and teaching, 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 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.

Twenty percent of the parents and 43% of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. The responses to the parental confidential questionnaire indicated high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted their appreciation of the changes effected by the new leadership and management including the effective communication between home and school. A significant minority of staff completed the questionnaire; their responses were very positive emphasising the collegial approach and the child-centred focus of the leadership of the school. The ETI has reported to the principal and a representative of the board of governors the main issues emerging from the parental and staff confidential questionnaires and the discussions.

## **2. Focus of inspection**

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all children, the purpose of inspection is, through effective linking of internal and external approaches, to evaluate the:

- children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy; including how the school is addressing low attainment and underachievement where applicable;
- quality of provision for learning in the school including the nursery unit; and
- quality of leadership and management.

## **3. Context**

St James's Primary School and Nursery Unit is a maintained primary school situated in Newtownabbey. Most of the children come from the surrounding area of Whiteabbey, Jordanstown and Greenisland. The enrolment has been increasing in the last four years and the school is undersubscribed currently. The percentage of children entitled to free school meals has increased in two out of the four years whilst the proportion requiring additional help with aspects of their learning has remained more or less constant. The school's proximity to a hospital and university has resulted in a significant number of newcomers in the school, originating from 12 countries. The school is involved in an effective shared education partnership with Whitehouse Primary School.

St James's Primary School	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Enrolment	226	236	240	242
% School attendance	95.7	96.5	96.1	N/A
% NI Primary school average	94.9	95.6	95.4	N/A
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	17	28	27	25
No. of children on SEN register	43	43	48	38
% of children on SEN register	18	18	20	18
No. of children with statements of educational need	*	7	6	5
No. of newcomer children	46	47	48	56

**Source:** data as held by the school.

\*fewer than five

N/A not available

#### 4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
<b>Achievements and standards</b>	Good
<b>Provision for learning</b>	Good
<b>Leadership and management</b>	Good
<b>Nursery Unit</b>	Good

#### 5. Achievements and standards

- The children are welcoming and respectful towards visitors and take pride in their school. They are confident when asking questions in group and paired activities, manage information effectively and show enjoyment in their learning, particularly when working collaboratively. Most of the children display positive attitudes and dispositions for learning.
- The school's performance data shows that most of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make progress in English and mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation.
- Throughout the school, the children can express clearly their feelings and opinions and, by the end of key stage (KS) 2, they are able to explain and justify their responses and challenge the responses of others using an expanding vocabulary. There is a need to develop more consistency in the children's attention and listening skills. From the foundation stage, the children are enthusiastic about their reading preferences and, by year 7, the most able children read fluently with expression and can talk with assurance about both contemporary and classic writers, commenting knowledgeably on the writer's style and on key characters and themes. The children's standard of writing is good; they can write well in a range of forms and for real and imaginary audiences and use the edit and review process competently to improve the quality and accuracy of their writing. It will be important for the staff to ensure the presentation of handwritten work is consistently high across all the areas of learning.

<sup>1</sup> The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of children entitled to free school meals.

- The children are developing positive attitudes to mathematics and, by the end of KS2, they are achieving good standards in their numeracy. In the foundation stage, the children make good progress in developing an understanding of number bonds, shape and space, measures and in using the associated mathematical language. The school has identified appropriately that the children in KS1 require further support to embed and build securely on their knowledge and skills. By the end of KS2, most of the children have a good understanding of the key areas within the mathematics curriculum and can apply them to solving problems in real life contexts. The children have an accurate understanding of key concepts using written computation, however, their flexibility of thinking and ability to approach tasks with a range of strategies is, at times, more limited.
- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are making good progress with adult support and are achieving in line with their peers.
- The children in the nursery unit are well settled and respectful to one another and the staff. Most of the children are developing effective social skills and friendships as they play together in pairs and small groups. They listen to and engage well with stories and rhymes; a small number of children display an interest in print and early mark making. When encouraged by the staff, the children use early mathematical language to count and talk about colour, measurement and shape as an integral part of their play. The children are independent in their choice and use of materials and play collaboratively and imaginatively in the role-play areas. Most of the children are confident using a range of small and large tools and equipment. They are also developing well their gross motor skills as they engage enthusiastically in physical, energetic play outdoors and show very good levels of balance and co-ordination.
- The children demonstrate good standards in information and communication technology (ICT). They can access information from a reliable source, create digital texts and are clear on what constitutes acceptable online behaviours.

## **6. Provision for learning**

- The teachers have reviewed the medium- and long-term planning to include appropriate learning and teaching strategies and are developing well their use of self-evaluation to improve the classroom experience for the children. Most of the teaching observed was effective in progressing the children's learning. In the best practice, the teachers: had appropriately high expectations; built effectively on the children's prior learning; demonstrated good classroom management techniques to promote positive behaviour and well structured group work; and, used good quality resources and effective questioning to stimulate children's language and thinking. In the less effective practice, a minority of the lessons, teachers did not provide sufficient opportunities for problem solving and did not match appropriately the tasks to the individual learning needs of the children. To raise standards further in written and oral work, the teachers need to provide more consistent formative feedback to the children.

- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified early through rigorous interrogation of internal data. The individual education plans have relevant targets which are specific, measurable and guide well the children's learning and social development. There is good communication between the classroom assistants and the teachers to inform the planning and to ensure a consistent approach to the support provided. The children are making good progress in the targeted withdrawal sessions for low and underachievement in literacy and numeracy.
- In the foundation stage, the stimulating range of well-resourced play activities provides good opportunities for the children to develop independent decision-making, creative thinking, and language and communication skills in an age-appropriate play context.
- There is systematic planning in place to ensure progress in all areas of language and literacy and this is being used effectively to underpin the acquisition and development of literacy skills. The children's enthusiasm for, and competence in, reading is developed effectively by the recent focus on guided reading. The teachers' effective use of the task board as an organisational tool for reinforcement and extended reading activities and the new reading programmes give more structure to the teaching of reading skills; they are impacting positively on the children's reading standards. The contexts for writing are meaningful and related to current issues. The children's interest and competence in writing are being developed by good opportunities to work with visiting writers and for publication. The staff need to provide the children with further opportunities for extended writing across all curricular areas and to monitor more closely the accuracy of the children's spelling.
- In numeracy, the teachers use data effectively to identify the range of need within their class and this is beginning to impact positively on how the planning is tailored for individuals and groups of children. The younger children have good opportunities to use a wide range of concrete materials during their numeracy lessons. In the best practice, the use of mathematical concepts and mathematical language are extended and embedded further during the play-based learning sessions. The numeracy withdrawal sessions, special events, such as, the mathematics challenge and the numeracy workshops for parents are contributing effectively to the development of the children's confidence and achievements. Appropriate aspects of the whole school planning for numeracy are being updated currently by the staff to place a greater emphasis on the application of the children's skills and knowledge, and the children's use of mathematical language to explain their thinking. In the best practice, the teachers are skilful in managing very effective activity-based sessions in which children develop and apply their mathematical knowledge and understanding. In addition, the teachers use effective questioning and give well-focused support to promote the children's mathematical language and thinking skills. Further staff development and the sharing of best practice are required to promote a greater shared understanding and consistency of approach across the whole school.

- In the nursery unit, the children's educational programme is well balanced providing good opportunities for learning across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. Particular strengths within the programme include the promotion of the children's independence, attention and concentration, their early representational artwork and the promotion of their physical development. The interactions of the staff to promote the children's learning and development are good to very good. In the best practice, staff members use effective questioning to encourage, support and challenge the children in their learning. The smooth flow to the daily routines develops effectively the children's independence and self-management skills. The recently developed outdoor play area provides a very good range of stimulating experiences which has enhanced their learning and development. The staff have identified the need to develop further their assessment methods and link the information more closely to the planning.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school and the nursery unit is very good. The supportive and inclusive ethos contributes to a positive learning environment for the children; the parents are welcomed and encouraged to be involved in the life of the school. The children take a pride in their achievements; they are developing well their understanding of leadership skills, and take on roles and responsibilities with enthusiasm as they contribute to the well organised Pupils' Council and Eco team and are encouraged to show care for others as 'playground pals'. The children's personal and social development is enhanced further through their participation in the PATHS<sup>2</sup> programme and through the good range of extra-curricular activities provided including music and sport.
- The school and nursery unit give good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity thereby encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The senior leadership team is managing very effectively a period of significant change in the school in terms of staffing and enrolment. They set high standards and expectations and provide a clear strategic vision for the school improvement journey, informed by robust self-evaluation and a consultative process. The highly committed co-ordinators have identified effectively relevant priorities and have led appropriate initiatives and staff development to raise further the children's attainment. They are in the process of developing and embedding effective practice. All of the staff work collaboratively to ensure the children attain the highest possible standards.
- The school development plan<sup>3</sup> has been informed by effective consultation with the children, their parents, staff, governors and members of the community to draw on their views and identify areas for improvement. Effective action plans, with a clear focus on the intended outcomes for the children, are in place to guide the work of all curricular areas.

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<sup>2</sup> PATHS\* Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies. A programme for schools ( UK version) to facilitate the development of self-control, emotional awareness and interpersonal problem solving skills

<sup>3</sup> The school development plan meets the requirements of the School Development Planning Regulations (NI) 2010



- The staff are building good partnerships with the parents to keep them informed and involved in their children's learning. Links with the wider community, including cross community residential trips and participation in 'Peace Proms' provide a range of opportunities beyond the classroom which benefit the children's learning and personal development.
- Based on the evidence at the time of the inspection, ETI's evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are well informed about all aspects of school life, including the standards achieved by the children, and are involved actively in the school development planning process that contributes to continuous improvement.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the 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 discussion with the inspectors, the children in year 6 spoke confidently about their enjoyment of school and reported that they feel safe and know who to go to if they have a concern.

## **8. Overall effectiveness**

St James's Primary School and Nursery Unit demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement, in particular, the need to ensure the consistency of high quality learning and teaching, especially in relation to effective classroom management and the strategies used to teach numeracy.

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