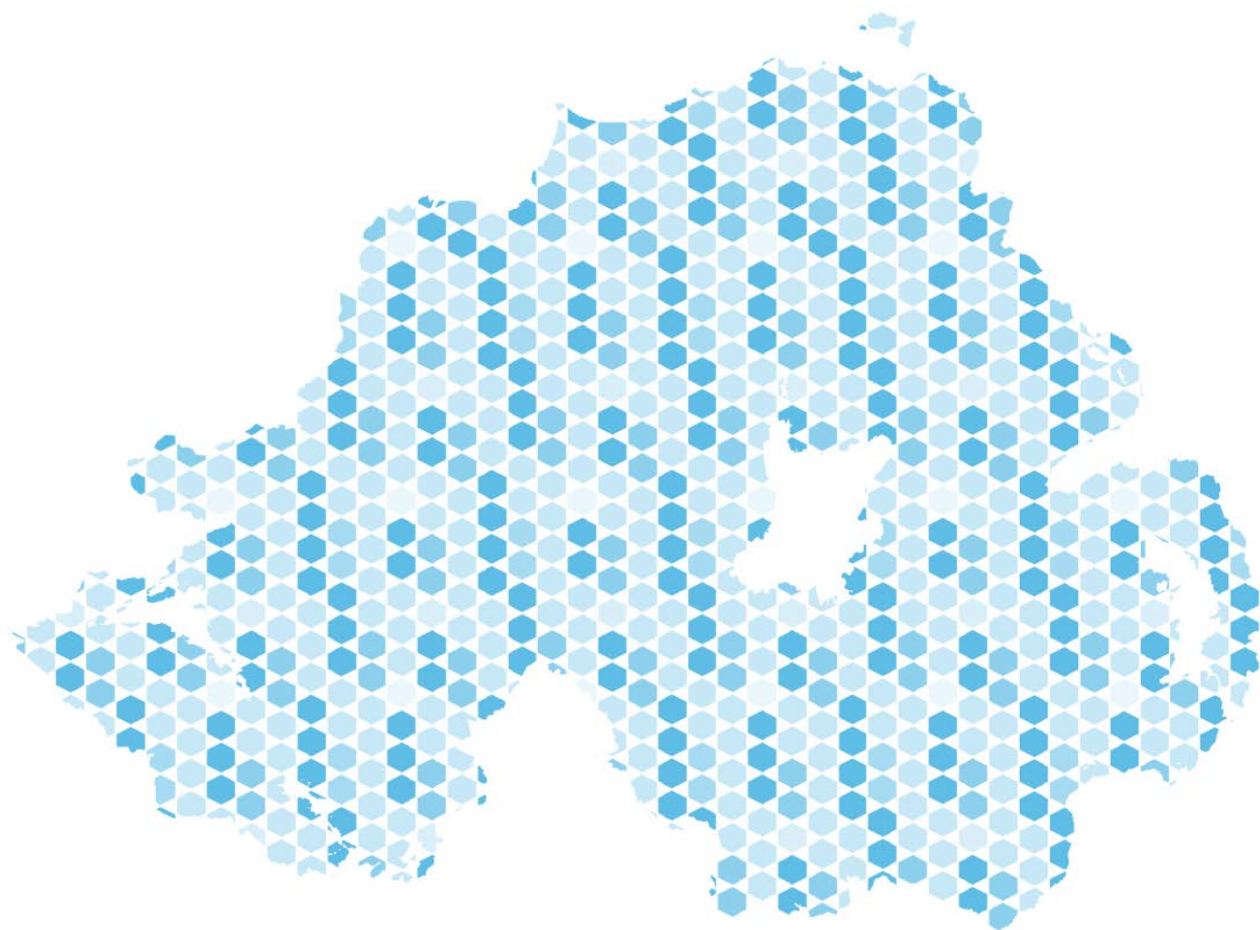


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Joseph's Primary School and
Nursery Unit, Dunloy,
County Antrim

Report of an Inspection in
November 2015

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.

Eight percent of parents and 70% of staff responded to the questionnaires. The responses to the parental questionnaires indicated very high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents recognised the school as an integral part of the wider community and highlighted their appreciation of: the care and support given to their children; the commitment of all staff to making the school a happy learning environment, where there are high expectations for every child; and, the increasing communication and partnership between home and school, enabling parents and teachers further opportunities to work together to support the children's learning. A majority of the staff completed questionnaires and their responses were very positive; they recognised the contribution of the board of governors to the work and life of the school and emphasised: the high quality of the working relationships across the school; the shared commitment of all staff to enabling every child to achieve their very best; and, the opportunities provided for ongoing professional development. The ETI has reported to the principal and representative of the board of governors the views of the parents and staff and the very few issues emerging from the questionnaires.

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 Joseph's Primary School and Nursery Unit is a maintained co-educational primary school situated in Dunloy, County Antrim. Almost all of the children attending the school come from Dunloy and the surrounding area. The enrolment has increased steadily, including a growing number of newcomer children and currently stands at 274, with an additional 52 children attending two part-time sessions in the nursery unit. The school prides itself on its 'Safe Place' status and the academic and pastoral provision throughout the school is positively reflected in its 'Rights Respecting School' status.

St Joseph's Primary School	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Enrolment	263	264	276	274
% School attendance	95.3	96.1	96	N/A
% NI Primary school average	94.9	95.6	N/A	N/A
FSME Percentage ¹	13	15	17	15
No. of children on SEN register	38	38	40	46
% of children on SEN register	14	14	14	17
No. of children with statements of educational need	8	5	6	5
No. of newcomer children	5	8	12	17

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

N/A not available

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Achievements and standards	Outstanding
Provision for learning	Very good
Leadership and management	Very good
Nursery Unit	Very good

5. Achievements and standards

- The children enjoy learning in a secure and stimulating environment and they have pride in their work and school. They show courtesy and respect to one another and to adults, including visitors to the school; their behaviour was exemplary during the inspection. The children work well individually and collaborate purposefully in pairs and in groups. As they progress through the school, the children live out increasingly the school mission statement, to 'Be the Best Person You Can Be', and mature as independent and reflective learners, growing in awareness that learning goes beyond school and is life-long.

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

- The school's performance data shows that almost all children, and most of those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make progress in English and mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation. The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are meeting well the appropriate targets outlined in their individual education plans.
- The children listen with interest to one another and use their talking, listening and thinking skills to improve their learning and written work. As they move through the key stages, the children exhibit an increasing awareness of the particular features of various forms of writing, including poetry. Almost all of the children produce attractive and well-written work which is of a good or better standard. The children enjoy reading; by year 7, most empathise maturely with characters, can comment on plot dilemmas and select and use evidence from their reading to support their oral and written responses.
- From an early age, the children display very positive attitudes towards mathematics; they engage enthusiastically in their learning activities, use mathematical vocabulary appropriately and are able to articulate well the processes they use to solve problems. In the foundation stage, the children develop a good understanding of number and are able to match, measure and compare. As they move through the school, the children become increasingly secure in their mathematical skills and understanding so that by year 7, they are flexible in their thinking, they understand the importance of mathematics to everyday life and can apply their learning to a variety of contexts.
- During the inspection, small groups of year 7 children discussed with the inspectors their experiences of reading and mathematics and the inspectors spoke to children in the classes they observed. The children talked enthusiastically about their favourite books and authors and used effective strategies to support their reading and understanding of unfamiliar words. The children demonstrated a very good understanding of mathematical concepts and were able to apply well their knowledge and skills to unfamiliar situations.
- The children in both nursery unit sessions are very well settled and most of them show very good levels of independence. They work well individually, in pairs and in groups and often engage in purposeful and concentrated play. The children are very well behaved and show respect for each other and their environment. Most of the children can talk about their work and experiences and can produce representational work of a good or better standard. They enjoy browsing through books, listen attentively to stories and participate enthusiastically in songs and rhymes. In the imaginative role play area, the children engage with their peers and act out real-life scenarios.
- As the children progress through the school, they use information and communication technology (ICT) with increasing confidence, competence and independence to demonstrate and extend their learning. They use ICT very well to create, improve and present their writing, managing effectively different information sources and presenting these in a range of appropriate and purposeful digital formats.

6. Provision for learning

- The teachers' planning is comprehensive, rigorous and promotes connected learning in meaningful contexts. Medium-term and short-term planning is well informed by thorough evaluation of the children's previous learning and the teachers' knowledge of their individual needs. A range of strategies are identified and employed, providing appropriate and effective differentiation. All of the lessons observed during the inspection were effective in promoting learning; a majority of the lessons were very good or better, and a significant minority were outstanding. In the most effective practice, there were well organised classroom routines to ensure the focus was on the children's learning, with high-quality opportunities to engage in creative, problem-solving and research activities which promoted the development of higher order thinking skills and independence.
- The staff are embedding successfully a variety of assessment for learning strategies, including effective questioning and formative feedback to draw out the children's thinking and to evaluate aspects of their own and others' work. As they progress through the school, the children are encouraged well to reflect on their learning through the use of personalised learning logs.
- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified at an early stage and appropriate procedures are in place to address their individual needs. The individual education plans are drawn up collaboratively by the special educational needs co-ordinator and the class teachers with a focus on setting appropriately challenging, specific and measureable targets for the individual child. The class teachers and classroom assistants work skilfully together to ensure the additional learning needs of the children are sensitively addressed within the classroom. In addition, effective withdrawal literacy and numeracy sessions are provided for children who require additional support.
- In all classes, the teachers provide a stimulating learning environment for literacy which promotes the children's skills in talking, listening, reading and writing and develops well their thinking. The very good provision for literacy is informed by the teachers' detailed planning which develops progressively the children's reading and writing. The teachers integrate literacy well across the curriculum to provide meaningful and purposeful contexts for learning. The school is implementing a systematic and coherent approach to the development of the children's literacy skills and knowledge about language. In particular, the development of an overview framework to guide the teaching of forms of writing is improving the quality and content of the children's extended writing.
- The very good provision for numeracy is underpinned by very high expectations of what the children can achieve and by policies which outline the school's holistic approach to mathematics as an area that is relevant to, and prepares the children for, their future lives. The numeracy lessons are very well-planned and develop effectively the children's knowledge, understanding and skills across the core areas of the mathematics curriculum; the children benefit significantly from the focus on developing problem-solving across the school. The children's skills

in mental mathematics are developed well through the activities provided at the beginning of numeracy lessons. A particular strength of the school's provision is the emphasis placed on developing the children's enthusiasm for, and enjoyment in, mathematics and lessons are enhanced further through a range of opportunities including involvement in competitions and the learning activities provided during Mathematics Week.

- The quality of the provision in the nursery unit is very good. There is a friendly, caring atmosphere and the working relationships at all levels are excellent. The indoor and outdoor learning environments are presented attractively and the children's ideas, interests and responses are noted regularly by the staff and linked effectively to the planning of the pre-school programme. The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified at an early stage and appropriate procedures are in place to address their individual needs. The staff interactions with the children are of a high quality; they engage readily with the children in their play, build upon their responses and develop their thinking skills. The staff promote effectively learning and teaching across almost all areas of the pre-school curriculum. They need to promote further the children's art work and creativity; on occasions, too much emphasis is placed on the end product rather than the artistic process. Information about the children's progress and development is shared with the parents throughout the year. The organisation of the day is managed well to provide variety in the experiences for the children and the daily programme includes a healthy snack and opportunities to engage in energetic physical play. The staff need to review aspects of the snack routine to provide more opportunities to promote the children's independence, at this time.
- The quality of pastoral care is outstanding. In a supportive and inclusive learning environment, involving all of the school community, every child is provided with opportunities to achieve and celebrate success. There is an emphasis on fostering respect for all and for developing in the children a clear sense of their rights and responsibilities, with priority being given to developing in the children, empathy for those within the school community and beyond. The school's core values are promoted and are evident at all levels; namely respect for oneself and others, honesty, trust, tolerance, sharing, caring and co-operation. The children take on roles and responsibilities through being class leaders, organising and leading assemblies and participating in the active School Council where the children's ideas and opinions are sought, valued and acted upon; for example, outside play being introduced during morning break-time. The holistic approach by the staff to the children's development meets very effectively their personal, social and emotional needs. Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) is well developed in the curriculum through a highly effective integrated and cross-curricular approach. There is a clear focus on preventative education through programmes such as 'Helping Hands' and promoting awareness of 'stranger danger' and care with regard to e-safety.
- The school and nursery unit give very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity thereby encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership at all levels is focused clearly on improving further the learning experiences for, and outcomes of, all the children. The highly effective senior leadership team (SLT) is very well supported by skilled and committed co-ordinators, teaching and non-teaching staff who work collegially to bring about school improvement. Very effective links have been established between the nursery unit and the staff in the primary school which promote progression in learning and facilitate well the children's transitions.
- School improvement is linked effectively to a school development plan (SDP) constructed through a rigorous process of self-evaluation and consultation with the children, parents, staff, governors and the community. Progress in addressing the key priorities is continually under review and the work focuses appropriately on improving the quality of the children's learning experiences and the standards that they attain. The associated action plans guide effectively the development work.
- The SLT and governors regard capacity building and continuous staff development as a high priority which is integral to the school improvement process. Consequently, the recent focus on developing a shared understanding of effective learning and teaching and being an effective co-ordinator have brought about significant improvements in the children's learning, and the standards that they attain, in a relatively short period of time. In addition, the school works well in partnership with a post-primary school to provide opportunities for further up-skilling of staff to extend the curricular provision for ICT. There is clear strategic direction for the future development of the school which takes account of the needs of the children, parents, staff and the wider community.
- The school has purposeful links and partnerships with the parents and the wider community including the Church, the local Gaelic Athletics Association (GAA) club and a number of post-primary schools. The parents are active in supporting the school, through the Parents-Teacher Association (PTA), and, in particular, have enabled a considerable investment in ICT resources which have resulted in the further improvement of the children's educational experiences and the progression of their digital skills.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are very well informed about the school's progress in terms of the priorities agreed and identified in the SDP, including through engagement with co-ordinators, and they exercise their challenge function as necessary to ensure the children's progress and outcomes are appropriate.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school and 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 children in year 6 reported that they are happy and secure in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their well-being.

8. Overall effectiveness

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.

Health and Safety

1. The employing authority, governors and principal need to review the access through the nursery unit gate as it presents safety concerns, in particular, at the drop-off time for the afternoon session of the nursery unit which coincides with the second lunch-time for the children in the primary school.

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