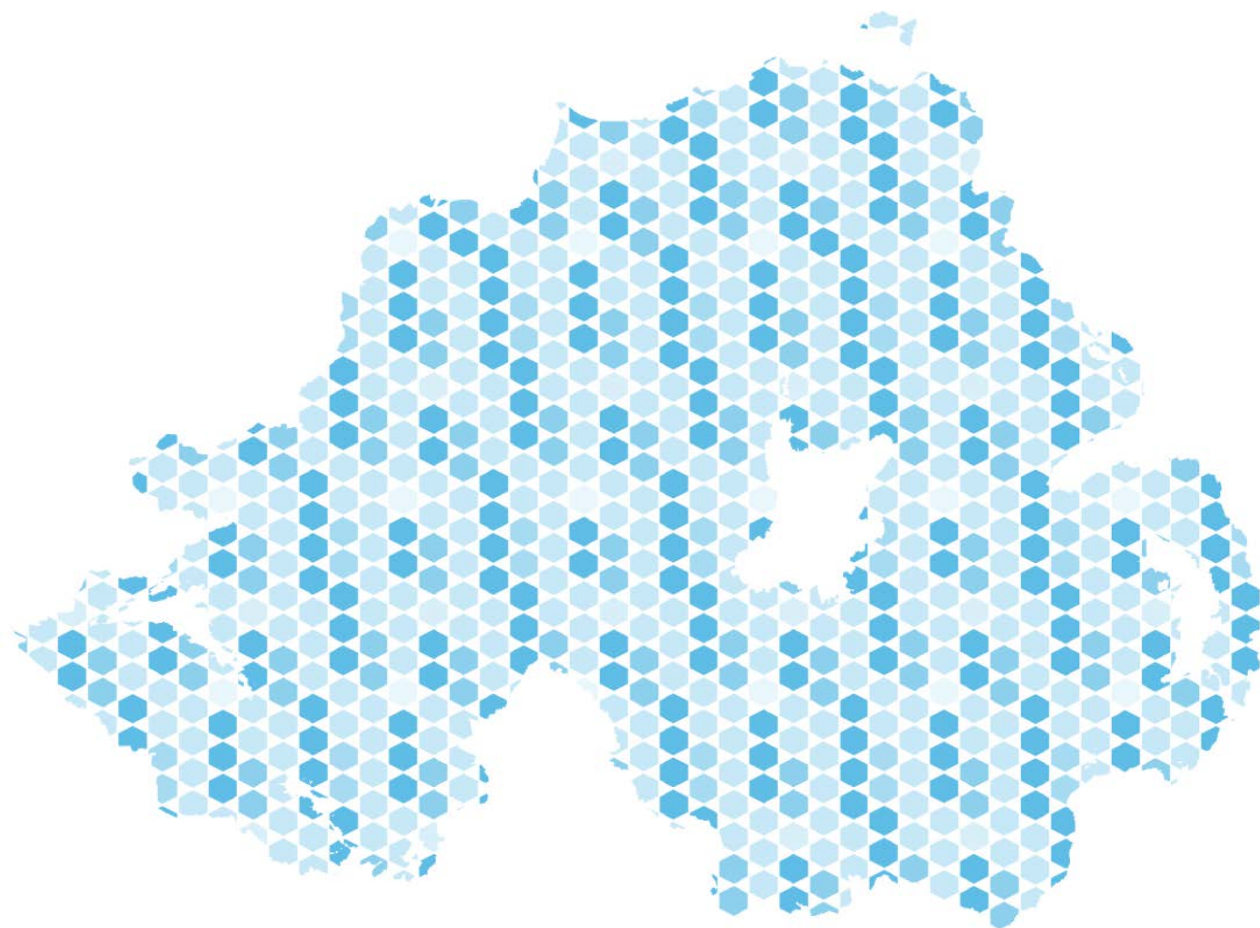


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Joseph's Primary School,  
Antrim

Report of an Inspection in  
January 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 the chairman of the board of governors;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Nine percent of parents and 62% of staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. The responses to the parental questionnaire indicated very high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted the high quality pastoral care of the children by the teachers and the support staff, the good communications between the school and home and the high expectations of the staff for the children's learning, performance and behaviour. The staff responses were very positive; they emphasised the learner-centred provision and the high expectations for the quality of the behaviour and attainment of the children across the school. The ETI has reported to the principal and a representative from the board of governors the responses 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; and
- quality of leadership and management.

## **3. Context**

St Joseph's Primary School is a maintained primary school situated on the outskirts of Antrim. Almost all of the children attending the school come from the immediate locality which is situated in a designated area of particularly high socio-economic deprivation. The enrolment has risen steadily, by approximately 28%, over the past four years while the percentage of children entitled to free school meals has fallen slightly over the same period. The proportion of children requiring additional help with aspects of their learning has remained steady. The number of newcomer children has risen significantly over the past four years.

The school has well established shared education links and initiatives with other schools in the surrounding area and is currently involved in the Shared Education Programme.

St Joseph's Primary School	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Enrolment	205	233	249	285
% School attendance	93.8	94.9	94.4	N/A
% NI Primary school average	94.9	95.6	95.4	N/A
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	39.0	39.0	38.0	32.6
No. of children on SEN register	64	75	82	88
% of children on SEN register	31.2	32.1	32.9	30.8
No. of children with statements of educational need	8	6	8	13
No. of newcomer children	29	35	43	51

**Source:** data as held by the school.  
N/A not available

#### 4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Achievements and standards	Good
Provision for learning	Very Good
Leadership and management	Very Good

#### 5. Achievements and standards

- The children interact well during group work, paired work and are enthusiastic learners. They are respectful towards one another and respond well to the positive atmosphere for learning and the good working relationships. The children are encouraged to carry out a variety of roles and responsibilities which develops well their communication and self-management skills. They are able to talk knowledgeably about their learning and their achievements.
- The school's internal data shows that almost all of the children make progress in English and most of the children make progress in mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation.
- By year 7, the standards achieved by the children in literacy are very good. The most able children read with fluency and expression. They respond with insight to the novels they have read in class, discuss enthusiastically the fiction and non-fiction they choose to read for pleasure and speak knowledgeably about a wide range of authors. The children have regular and purposeful opportunities to talk and listen to one another, developing very well their oral communication skills; they express their ideas and opinions with confidence. They present their work well whilst writing in a range of genres; however, in a minority of instances, there is insufficient challenge for the most able children to develop further their creative writing skills.

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

- The children develop well their understanding of mathematics so that by year 7 they achieve good standards in numeracy. They demonstrate their understanding in numeracy while participating in an appropriate range of practical activities. The children develop their understanding and use of mathematics vocabulary during the innovative use of resources, particularly in foundation and early key stage (KS) 1. By the end of KS 2 the children display a good range of skills and understand the important mathematical thinking strategies to enable them to carry out mental calculations with accuracy and speed. However, they are not provided with sufficient opportunities to apply and develop their mathematical skills through problem-solving activities related to real-life contexts across all areas of mathematics.
- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are integrated well into whole-class activities. The highly effective 'Reading Recovery' sessions and the in-class support, from the skilled staff, have a positive impact on the children's attainment in literacy. Almost all of the children receiving support make consistent progress in English. Those children who have been identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning need more help to make progress and attain in numeracy.
- The children develop and use their Information and Communication Technology skills progressively as they move through the school so that, by year 7, they achieve good standards in their work. The school are appropriately developing expertise in, and further use of, mobile digital technologies to enhance the learning experience for the children.

## **6. Provision for learning**

- All of the lessons observed were at least good, with almost half evaluated as very good or better. In the most effective practice, the teachers use a very good range of creative learning activities to motivate and interest the children. There is appropriate pace and challenge in the children's work, particularly in literacy, which is assessed regularly with advice on how to improve further. The medium-term planning provides appropriate opportunities for the children to connect their learning across the curriculum, particularly through their topic work. The school use a range of assessments well to inform the teachers of the children's progress and to identify barriers to their learning. While, in the most effective practice, teachers use the evaluation of the children's learning well to inform their planning, the approach is not consistent across the school and, there is a need to bring greater consistency to the teachers' practice.
- All of the literacy lessons observed were effective in promoting learning. The teachers prepare well for literacy lessons, employing a range of suitable activities and resources to support learning and teaching. In the most effective practice the class novel is used effectively as a stimulus for the development of oral and written communication skills. The teachers use skilfully the opportunities to promote literacy through other curricular areas. The children's development of oral communication and their awareness of how sounds and words are represented in print are promoted well through play-based learning.

- The recently reviewed numeracy programme ensures good progression in most aspects of mathematics. In the most effective numeracy lessons, in half of the lessons observed, there are very good opportunities for the children to make connections in their learning and develop their mathematical thinking across other areas of the curriculum. The teachers in the foundation stage and KS 1 make effective use of a range of practical materials, outdoor activities and mental mathematics strategies to build on the children's prior knowledge and to reinforce key concepts in numeracy. Further development of the provision is required to improve aspects of mathematics and raise standards in numeracy consistently for all of the children.
- There are effective arrangements in place to identify early those children who are experiencing difficulty with aspects of their learning. The individual education plans include personal targets relating to their specific need, and outline teaching strategies used to support each learner but lack sufficiently specific numeracy targets. The support for children experiencing difficulties with aspects of literacy is provided through a programme of high quality withdrawal sessions and in-class support. Each child is monitored with systematic assessments, tracking and review of progress. There is a need to complement the high quality literacy support with similarly good provision for numeracy.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is a particular strength of the school. The staff are highly committed to the care and well-being of the children. The school motto, '*Faith, friendship and learning for life*', is reflected in the ethos of mutual respect and the positive, supportive and inclusive learning environment. The children are proud of their school and report that they are listened to by the staff which is evidenced by, for example, the work of the school council.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity thereby encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The senior leadership of the school has undergone significant changes within the last three years and, more recently, in the past six months. Notwithstanding the recent appointments in leadership and management, there is a clear focus on the quality of the learning and teaching and a deep knowledge of the challenges and opportunities facing the school. The members of the senior leadership team share a common vision and have high expectations for the school. The middle leaders hold multiple co-ordinating roles, consequently, they have insufficient time to develop fully the areas they individually lead. Given the nature of their areas of responsibility, and the increase in the enrolment, it will be necessary to review the management structure, the coordinator roles and their responsibilities.
- The school development plan<sup>2</sup> was produced with extensive consultation and is of very good quality. The action plans guide development and improvement well in almost all of the key areas relating to the quality of learning and attainment for the children.

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<sup>2</sup> The school development plan meets the requirements of the School Development Planning Regulations (NI) 2010

- The school has developed a range of purposeful links with the parents and carers of the children. They are well informed about their children's progress and the life and work of the school through, for example, the informative school newsletters. There are very effective links with the local and wider community including the nursery school, the local controlled primary school and other primary schools in the greater Antrim and Randalstown areas, which enhances further the children's learning experiences. The school is supported well by a vibrant parent teacher association in providing a range of enrichment activities for the children.
- The governors are committed to the school and provide very good strategic direction and guidance to senior leadership. They understand well their support and challenge functions and the importance of their decision-making roles in meeting the needs of all of the children. Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, ETI's evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has 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 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 and, in particular, addresses the need to improve the attainment of the children in numeracy, particularly those who have been identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.



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