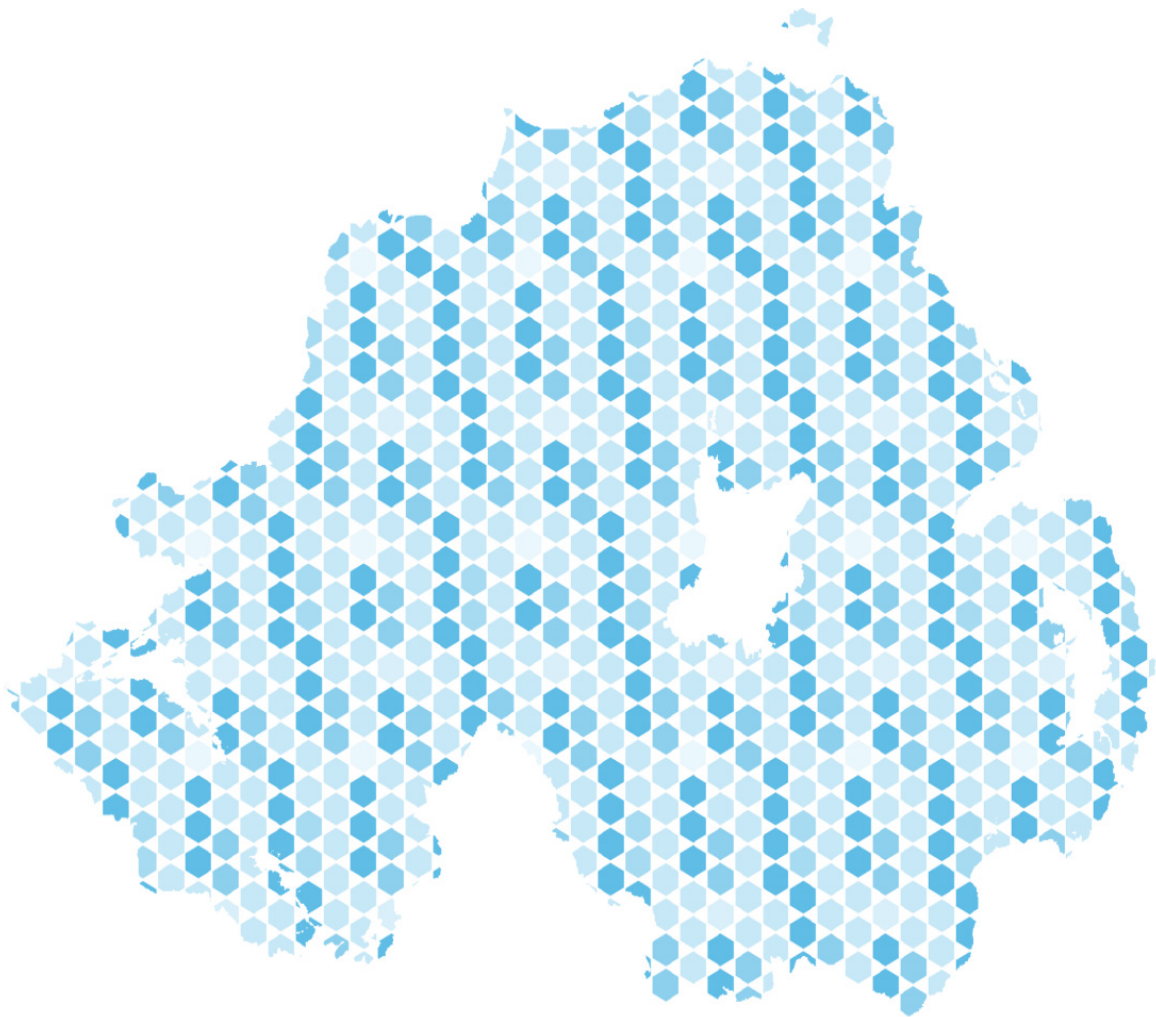


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Joseph's and St James'  
Primary School, Poyntzpass

Report of an Inspection  
in November 2011



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%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

## SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Joseph and St James's Primary School is situated in the village of Poyntzpass, near Newry. The school opened in September 2007 as a result of an amalgamation between St Joseph's Primary School, Poyntzpass and St James's Primary School in Tandragee. The current enrolment trend has shown a slight increase from 114 pupils in 2007 to 116 pupils at the time of the inspection. Around 23% of the children are entitled to free school meals and 16% have been identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

## FOCUS

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy;
- the quality of provision for learning; and
- the quality of leadership and management including the school's processes for self-evaluation leading to improvement.

## OVERALL FINDING OF THE INSPECTION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is very good and the pastoral care is outstanding. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children, and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

## KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

### Achievements and Standards

The quality of most of the children's **achievements and standards** is very good.

The children make very good progress in English and mathematics as they progress through the school and attain standards by the end of key stage (KS) 2 that are in line with or above their recorded ability levels. In order to raise the standards further all of the children would benefit from more regular opportunities to engage in extended and creative writing, and a significant minority would benefit from consistent support for the development of their oracy skills.

The children identified with **special educational needs** make very good progress in reaching their identified targets.

The **children** demonstrate very positive attitudes to their learning and show respect and consideration for others. They can work both independently and collaboratively in groups and pairs. They listen attentively and most are confident to contribute to class discussions and express their views and ideas. The children use practical materials well and they have developed high levels of competency with computers to support their learning.

The children achieve very good standards in their use of **information and communication technology (ICT)**.

## **Provision for Learning**

The provision for learning is very good.

The quality of the **teaching** observed during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to outstanding, with most of the lessons being good or better. Key features of the best practice observed included the use of very effective questioning techniques which encouraged extended oral responses from the children, stimulating activities which were very well matched to their interests and abilities and excellent opportunities for younger children to experiment with early writing, mark making and mathematical language during imaginative play based learning. In the less effective practice, there was insufficient focused support for groups of children.

The excellent quality of the **pastoral care** is a key strength within the school. The inclusive, child-centred ethos and caring, supportive atmosphere is built on mutual respect at all levels. The children respond well to the many approaches to promoting positive behaviour; their behaviour during the inspection was exemplary. The children develop an increasing sense of responsibility and self esteem through a wide range of initiatives such as the Eco Council and the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools.

The school has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for **safeguarding** children. These arrangements reflect the child protection guidance issued by the Department of Education.

The school gives very good attention to promoting **healthy lifestyles** through the curriculum, healthy breaks and the regular opportunities for a range of sports and physical activity.

**Parents** are strongly encouraged to engage in their child's learning and be involved fully in the school.

## **Leadership and Management**

The quality of leadership and management is very good.

The Principal has shown effective leadership in the successful amalgamation of two schools. He has been involved in the systematic development of a wide range of very good pastoral, curricular and extra-curricular improvements within the school.

The Vice-Principal, curricular leaders and special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) make a very good contribution to developing, monitoring and evaluating curricular areas. There is a culture of **self-evaluation** leading to continuous improvement among the whole staff and they all take responsibility for developing various aspects of school life.

Parents, pupils, staff and governors are given opportunities to contribute to the improvement process. The **School Development Plan** has identified a range of relevant priorities and is supported by clearly focused action plans. Staff development and parental support are linked effectively with the priorities identified. The school recognises the need to embed the many developments and initiatives which have been introduced and to focus clearly on promoting high quality teaching and learning in order to raise standards further.

The employing authority, school governors and the staff need to keep under review any issues related to the size of the school, in order to continue with the effective planning and management of the needs of the children and the staff.

## **CONCLUSION**

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.



## APPENDIX 2

### **THE VIEWS OF THE PARENTS, TEACHERS, GOVERNORS, (SUPPORT STAFF) AND CHILDREN**

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents, the teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Of the 79 questionnaires issued to parents, 32 were returned to Inspection Services Branch, including 12 which contained additional written comments. A group of parents, including a governor and members of the parent support group, also met with the Reporting Inspector to convey their views of the school. All of the parental responses indicated a high level of satisfaction with the education and pastoral care provided by the school. In particular, they commented on the positive ethos, the value of the school within the local community, the dedicated and caring staff and the role of the Principal in bringing about improvements. The small number of issues raised have been shared with the Principal.

The teaching and support staff returns were very positive; they highlighted the staff's endorsement of the work of the Principal, the good working relationships, the strong sense of teamwork and the progress and developments made by the school.

The inspectors also met with a group of year 6 children; they talked about their role in the school council, their enjoyment of art and sport and their appreciation for the teachers. They reported that they are happy in school and they feel safe. They are aware of whom to talk to if they have any concerns.

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