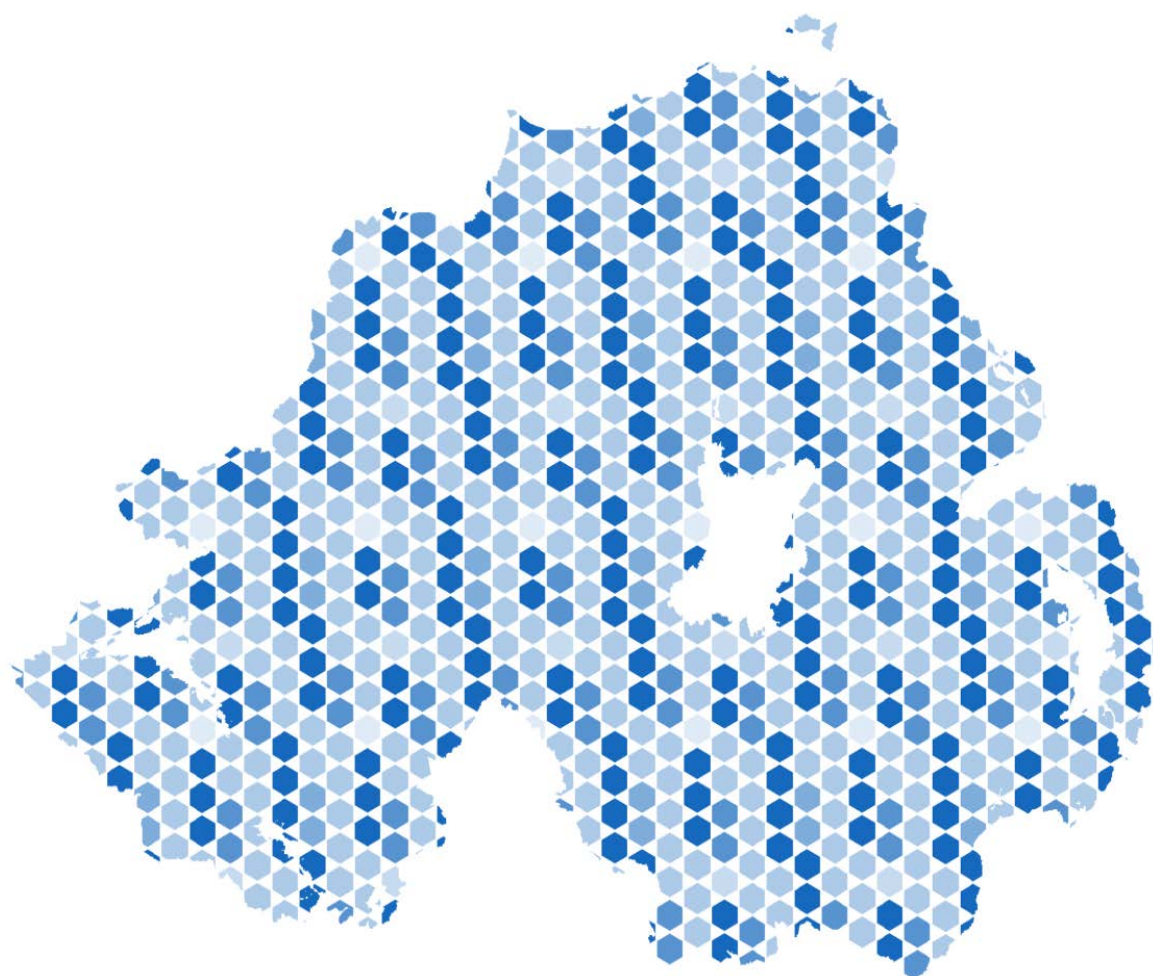


SPECIAL SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Arvalee School and Resource
Centre, Omagh, County Tyrone

Report of an Inspection in
May 2016



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing Inspection Services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
Department for Communities

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 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 special schools, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self-evaluation* at: <http://www.eti.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-special-education.htm>

Inspectors observed learning and teaching, scrutinised documentation and the pupil's written work and held formal and informal discussions with pupils (individually and in groups), teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included a meeting with representatives from the governors and the opportunity for all parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

A minority of the parents (13) completed the confidential questionnaire, and almost all of their responses were positive. In particular the parents highlighted their appreciation of the work of the school staff. Almost half of the staff (28), both teaching and non-teaching, completed the questionnaire and they highlighted the high standards that staff set for the children to enable them to make good and steady progress. Issues raised through the questionnaires were discussed with the principal and representatives of the board of governors.

2. Focus of inspection

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

- evaluate the quality of the provision and the outcomes for the pupils;
- evaluate the school's leadership and management and its capacity to effect and sustain improvement in its provision and outcomes; and
- inform the school's planning for improvement.

3. Context

Arvalee School and Resource Centre supports children aged 3 to 19 years who have moderate and severe learning difficulties. The profile of the pupils has been changing gradually with an increase in the number of pupils with severe learning difficulties. As well as the increase in the enrolment there has been an increase in the number of pupils who are entitled to free school meals. The school is a partner in the Strule Shared Education Campus in Omagh and will move to the campus in September 2016. The school is also an active member of the Omagh Learning Community.

| Arvalee School and Resource Centre | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 |
|------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Enrolment school | 103 | 108 | 108 | 121 |
| % Attendance | 88.5 | 93.7 | 93.2 | N/A |
| FSME Percentage ¹ | 59 | 54 | 56 | 67 |
| Newcomers | * | * | * | * |

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

N/A not available

4. Overall findings of the inspection

| Overall effectiveness | Capacity to identify and bring about improvement |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Achievements and outcomes | Good |
| Provision for learning | Good |
| Leadership and management | Good |

5. Achievements and outcomes

- The pupils are happy, friendly and polite learners who engage confidently with staff, visitors to the school and one another. Throughout the school pupils engage in their learning with enthusiasm and interest.
- Most of the pupils demonstrate good behaviour and are developing well their social skills, knowledge and understanding of the importance of personal safety, including e-safety. The pupils' achievements and work are regularly celebrated in class and at school assemblies. When provided with engaging activities which match well the pupils' interests, they demonstrate sustained motivation and enjoyment of learning.
- The pupils contribute well to class discussions, communicating their opinions through a variety of means and many engage in paired and group work activities. The pupils, for whom it is attainable, read and write with developing confidence. By key stage 5 the most able pupils are able to apply their knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts in a range of real-life contexts and participate successfully in a wide range of work placements and further education opportunities.
- Senior pupils achieve well in external examinations and demonstrate progress in their learning through a range of entry level CCEA² and ASDAN³ accredited courses including literacy, numeracy, art and design, personal and social development, physical education and personal progress. The pupils attend the local college to access occupational studies in design and creativity and environment and society; the majority achieve a level 2 qualification.

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

² Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment.

³ Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network.

- Almost all of the pupils leaving school go on to further education or training placements. There are a range of accredited courses in personal development and vocational studies which develop the independent living and employability skills of the young people so that, by the time they leave school, they are confident in their social interactions with others.

6. Provision for learning

- Most of the teaching observed was good or better. In these lessons, the teachers use questions skilfully to develop the pupils' responses and encourage curiosity. The staff provide support sensitively to enable the pupils to demonstrate their understanding across the curriculum. In the associated planning there is appropriate differentiation, and use of materials and equipment to meet the needs and abilities of the pupils. Evidence of progression including photographs, samples of work, formal assessments or evaluations and written notes is collated by class teachers in individual files which accompany the pupils through the school. In the best practice, a significant minority of lessons observed, there are appropriate evaluations of the planning and learning that inform future provision and marking focuses on guiding the pupils as to how to improve their work. This effective practice needs to be implemented more consistently throughout the school. In the less effective practice, a minority of lessons observed, there is a lack of opportunity for more practical learning experiences and an over-reliance on worksheets.
- In the most effective practice observed, the individual education plans address the holistic needs of the pupils and have achievable targets. In a minority of lessons, the planning is insufficiently detailed and subsequent evaluations of learning are not sufficiently addressed. The individual education plan targets are set annually and it is appropriate that the school have identified the need to revise this with a view to setting targets at more regular intervals throughout the year.
- The majority of the pupils enjoy their experience of the broad programme for mathematics. In the most effective practice, in the majority of lessons observed, the pupils actively engage in a range of practical activities set in real-life contexts. In the less effective practice, in a minority of lessons, there is insufficient differentiation and over-direction by the teacher. The pupils in the foundation stage, key stage 1 and 2 need to have more opportunities for numeracy in their play activities.
- In the majority of the literacy lessons observed, the lessons were characterised by a range of stimulating and engaging activities, the learning was contextualised and relevant to the pupils and there was appropriate differentiation to meet the needs of all the learners. The reading scheme has been extended to further develop the phonological awareness of pupils; it is important that staff can access further training in a range of appropriate literacy strategies to support effectively the further progression of pupils.

- There is effective use of Information and communication technology (ICT) which engages pupils, enhances communication systems and supports learning in many areas of the curriculum. In particular, connected learning across various subjects is purposefully developed in the senior school through the making of short films and digital imaging. The school needs to build on this effective practise and further develop and embed the use of ICT throughout the school.
- The programme for Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance is well developed. Effective links have been established with local businesses which supports well the wide-ranging work experience opportunities for the pupils in line with their interests and occupational studies courses. The school benefits from close liaison with the Department of Education's transitions officer and the learning careers officer. Transition meetings offer effective guidance and support to pupils and their parents or carers. Links with a number of local schools have been established through the local area learning community.
- The quality of the provision for pastoral care in the school is good. There is a friendly and inclusive ethos, and there are positive working relationships between staff and pupils. The pupils contribute purposefully to decision making by, for example, proposing design features for their new school through their active school council. An important feature of the pastoral care is the very good work being done with pupils who have additional behavioural needs; a well planned programme of both home and school support addresses the pupils needs very effectively. The school provides a wide range of additional learning experiences such as horticulture and cycling which develops well the pupils' physical, academic and social skills.
- The school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity through, for example, the healthy breaks, growing their own vegetables and a range of sporting activities including swimming, thereby encouraging the pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The senior leadership team meet regularly and work together within clearly defined roles for curricular and pastoral care. Information from meetings is distributed to all members of staff to support open communication within the school. The senior management has identified the need to review the middle management structures within the school and teams have been formed across the curriculum to further build capacity within all staff.
- There is inconsistency in the practice and evaluation of the middle management. The roles and responsibilities within each team need to be developed further to ensure consistency in how each key curriculum area is led, co-ordinated and monitored. In the best practise, a small number of co-ordinators monitor the school's provision for their areas of responsibility and evaluate the extent of the pupils' progress and attainments, to ensure that improvement in pupils' learning is sustained.

- Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governor's provide challenge and support to the senior management team and have begun visiting classes to experience the provision within the school and develop a closer working relationship with all members of staff. It is important that this effective practice is embedded further.
- The school development plan⁴ has been drawn up following consultation with pupils, parents, staff and governors. There are clear strategies to guide how targets will be achieved and progress is reviewed and presented to the board of governors annually. There is a need for consistency in the quality of the associated action plans to ensure that all action plans include a clear focus on raising further the provision and attainment of pupils through effective teaching and learning strategies.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of inspection, the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children and young people. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. During the inspection, the inspectors met with two groups of pupils. In discussions, the pupils reported that they enjoy their subjects, and are happy in school; they feel very secure 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 continue to monitor how the school sustains improvement. In particular, the need to:

- develop further an effective team to lead, co-ordinate, monitor and evaluate key curriculum areas and the impact on pupil learning; and
- develop the evaluation of learning in all classes to inform lesson planning.

⁴ The school development plan meets the requirements of the School Development Planning Regulations (NI) 2010.

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