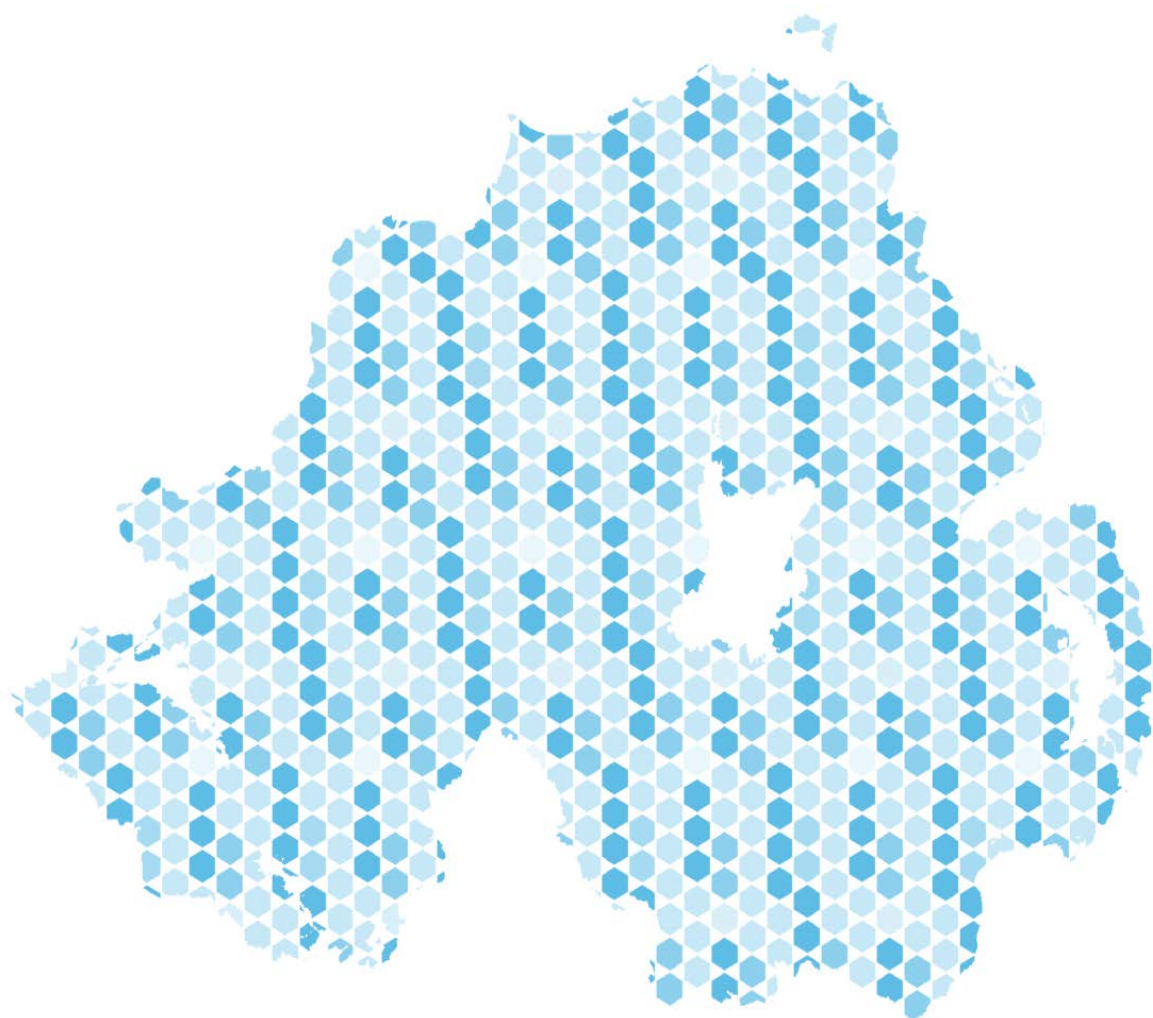


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Joseph's Convent Primary  
School and Nursery Unit,  
Newry

Report of an Inspection  
in January 2013

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## Inspection methods and evidence base

The inspection evaluations are based on evidence gained from lesson observations, from scrutiny of the children's completed written work and from a range of documentation including the school's internal performance data. In addition, the inspection team held discussions with groups of the children, with teaching and non-teaching staff and with representatives from the Board of Governors.

The views of the parents, teaching and non-teaching staff were sought through a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. The reporting inspector discussed any issues raised through the questionnaires with the principal and the governors. A summary of the outcomes from the questionnaires is included in section 6 of the report.

## Quantitative terms

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

## 1. School context

St Joseph's Convent Primary School is situated in the centre of Newry. The school has a nursery unit which provides two full-time sessions catering for 52 children. The school also has a learning support centre, which consists of two learning support classes (LSC), for key stage (KS) 1 and key stage (KS) 2, and a KS 1 autism support class (ASC). The total enrolment of the school has decreased by 9% over the past five years and stands currently at 477; 16% of the children are newcomers. At the time of the inspection, approximately 34% of the children were entitled to free school meals and 21% of the children were identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

This inspection completes the work that began in March 2012. The inspection was incomplete at that stage due to industrial action being taken by the staff not to co-operate with the Education and Training Inspectorate on advice from their teaching union.

## 2. Focus of inspection and overall finding

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy, in particular, how the school is addressing low attainment and under-achievement where applicable;
- the quality of provision in the school and nursery unit; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

In addition, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning and the school's arrangements for pastoral care, including safeguarding, were evaluated.

### OVERALL FINDING OF THE INSPECTION

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.

#### Summary of key findings

Achievements and standards	Very Good
Quality of provision	Very Good
Leadership and management	Very Good
Nursery Unit	Good
Learning Support Centre	Very Good

### KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

### **3. Achievements and standards**

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

- The children's behaviour is exemplary; they respect, care and support one another both in the classroom and in the playground. They are enthusiastic, highly motivated and engage fully in their learning. They take pride in their work, work well both independently and collaboratively and are able to transfer skills and capabilities across all areas of learning.
- An analysis of the KS 2 assessment data over the past four years shows that, in English and mathematics, the school's performance is in line with or above the Northern Ireland (NI) average in three of the last four years. When compared with schools in the same free school meals category (FSM), the levels of attainment in English and mathematics are also in line with or above the average in three of the last four years. The school's internal performance data indicates that, by the end of KS 2, almost all of the children are achieving standards in English and mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation.
- By year 7, the children achieve very good standards in reading, writing and talking and listening. They read fluently and with expression and talk with enthusiasm and understanding about their favourite authors and characters. The children write to a high standard in a range of genre and for a range of audiences; the standard of presentation in most of the children's books is excellent. The children listen very well in class, contribute to group and class discussions, explain their thinking clearly and speak confidently about their learning. Across all key stages, the children's numeracy work is displayed and celebrated, and the standards of presentation in their books are excellent. They use mathematical language appropriately to articulate their thinking and explain their reasoning. By year 7, the children have a very good knowledge and understanding of all areas of the mathematics curriculum. They can also apply their mathematical knowledge well in other areas of learning.
- The children identified as having special educational needs (SEN), including those children in the learning support centre, make very good progress in their learning and achieve standards in line with their ability. They work confidently and, by the end of KS 2, attain the skills to work independently.
- The children in the nursery unit are well settled and have positive attitudes to their learning. Almost all of the children are able to engage in sustained and purposeful play; they show good levels of independence and co-operate well with one another and with the adults. They make good use of the indoor and outdoor learning environments, choose activities freely and display good self-management skills. A majority of the children produce good representational art and model making and a small number can recognise and attempt to write their own name. The children are making good progress in their social development and are improving their communication skills.
- The achievements and standards in ICT are very good. Throughout the school, the children have confidence and a high level of competence in using a range of ICT resources to support their learning effectively.

#### 4. Provision for learning

**The quality of the provision for learning is very good.**

- Significant work has been undertaken recently by the teaching staff to improve the quality of the long-term and medium-term planning; the quality of the planning is very good. The evaluations, combined with the effective use of internal performance data, are used to inform future planning and to tailor the teaching in order to meet the needs of all the children. In assessing the children's work, most of the teachers identify clearly for the children the strengths of their work and provide guidance on how to improve the work further; it will be important for the school to identify the best practice and to disseminate this throughout the school. During the inspection, the quality of the teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding; almost all of the teaching observed was good or better, with the majority being very good or outstanding. In the most effective practice: the lessons were suitably paced; the lessons built successfully on the children's prior knowledge and learning; and, the teachers used skilful questioning to engage and challenge the children, especially during the highly effective plenaries.
- Literacy and numeracy are provided effectively across the curriculum and the teaching of both literacy and numeracy is of a very good standard. The teachers have realistically high expectations of what the children can achieve. The well-planned, play-based learning sessions in the nursery unit and foundation stage provide the children with valuable opportunities to use and develop their early language and literacy skills. A range of strategies and effective resources are used throughout the school to promote learning in literacy and the teachers work hard to ensure the holistic development of the children's skills in talking, listening, reading and writing. The recent focus on the development of guided reading throughout the school has had a positive impact on both the children's achievement in, and attitude to, all aspects of literacy, and in particular to reading. The recently reviewed, whole-school programme for mathematics is of a very good quality and provides the teachers with clear guidance for appropriate coherence and progression in the children's learning; the context of the learning is often set in a theme of interest chosen by the children. A key feature of the mathematics provision is the successful integration of both mathematical processes and mental mathematics throughout the programme. A range of ICT resources is integrated effectively into classroom activities to support, enrich and extend the children's learning in both literacy and numeracy.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school and in the nursery unit is outstanding. There is a wholly inclusive and supportive ethos throughout the school. The older children have high levels of responsibility and empathy for others through the 'buddy', 'playtime friends' and 'litter helpers' systems. The school council provides the children with meaningful opportunities to contribute to the decision making process.
- The overall quality of the provision for SEN is outstanding. The children's learning needs are identified early by the SEN co-ordinator and class teachers and a range of effective strategies, including 'Better Reading Partnership', are used to address the range of difficulties that the children encounter. The

individual education plans are concise and appropriate to the needs of the children. The children's progress is monitored rigorously and analysed meticulously to inform future planning and teaching. The classroom assistants are involved in the planning of the provision and support the children skilfully in the classroom and playground.

- The staff in the nursery unit provides good opportunities for learning across the pre-school curriculum and the quality of their interaction with the children is of a consistently high standard. The development of the children's creative skills, language and mathematical awareness are particular strengths of the programme. The written planning outlines variety, progression and challenge in the programme and guides the staff in their work. Appropriate observations and records of the children's progress are recorded and are used to build up a profile of their development. The daily timetable provides lengthy periods for the children to develop their play, however, aspects of the dinner routine need to be reviewed to ensure the staff has sufficient quality time to spend with the children to develop further their language, learning and social skills.
- The quality of the provision in the learning support centre is very good. The planning, teaching and assessment are all highly effective, ensuring that the children make very good progress in all aspects of their learning. The children benefit from inclusion with their peer groups throughout the school, particularly in relation to the development of their communication, play and social skills.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. The children's involvement in environmental activities through the Eco garden and the Healthy Break initiative, as well as the wide range of sports available, encourages them to adopt healthy lifestyles.

## **5. Leadership and management**

### **The quality of leadership and management is very good.**

- The senior leadership team (SLT) has a shared strategic vision for the school; all members of the SLT work very effectively to guide developments in learning and teaching and to ensure high quality outcomes for all of the children. There is a comprehensive school development plan (SDP) that is underpinned by rigorous self-evaluation and supported by appropriate action plans. Planning is monitored effectively by the SLT and individual teachers receive evaluative and formative feedback on their planning each term; the SLT has appropriately identified the need to develop further the role of co-ordinators in monitoring and evaluating the quality of learning and teaching within their areas of responsibility. Excellent use is made of performance data and teacher observation to identify the extent of children's achievements and to implement a range of suitable strategies, which ensure that the learning is appropriately challenging and tailored to meet the needs of each child.
- The school has well-established and effective links with the local community which are focused on supporting the children's learning. In particular, the children benefit from very good pastoral and curricular links with a range of local post-primary schools for sports, science, technology, art, drama and music, as

well as to support them appropriately as they transfer to the next stage of their learning. The parents are kept very well informed about the work of the school and receive regularly useful information on how they can help support their child's learning. The school makes very good use of its 'Extended Schools' funding by providing a wide range of additional activities which address very well the children's personal, social and educational needs.

- The governors support the Principal well; they are committed to the school and play an important, active and informed role in many aspects of the life and work of the school.
- 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.

## 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.

### 6. Summary of questionnaire responses

PARENTAL QUESTIONNAIRES	
<b>PRIMARY SCHOOL</b>	
Number of Questionnaires Issued (Based on 11/12 Enrolment)	107
Number of Questionnaires Returned	39
Percentage of Returns (Based on Actual Issue)	36.4%
Number of Comments	14
<b>NURSERY UNIT</b>	
Number of Questionnaires Issued	52
Number of Questionnaires Returned	18
Percentage of Returns	34.6%
Number of Comments	7
<b>LEARNING SUPPORT CENTRE</b>	
Number of Questionnaires Issued	30
Number of Questionnaires Returned	17
Percentage of Returns	56.7%
Number of Comments	3

Almost all of the parents expressed satisfaction with the school and praised, in particular, the excellent attention given to pastoral care and the manner in which they are kept informed of school news and events. The very few issues raised in the parental questionnaires were discussed with the Principal and the governors.

In discussions held with the year 6 children, they talked openly and enthusiastically about their experiences in the school. They appreciate the care, support and hard work of all the adults, and value the meaningful role played by the student council in representing their views. The children understand and value the school rules and the high expectations for their behaviour. They enjoy the range of after school extra-curricular activities. The children indicated that they know what to do and who to turn to if they have any concerns regarding their work or their safety and well-being.

In discussion with the governors, they expressed their full support for the work of the Principal, the SLT and all of the staff in the school.

TEACHERS QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Returned	21
Number of Comments	11

SUPPORT STAFF QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Returned	20
Number of Comments	6

Most of the teachers and support staff expressed satisfaction with most aspects of school life; they praised the high degree of importance that is placed on child protection and pastoral care throughout the school. A number of concerns were raised, however, through the confidential questionnaires in relation to communication and staff welfare in the school. These issues were shared with the Principal and the governors.

**Health and safety**

- Access to the school campus, the main school building and to a number of mobile classrooms is not secured.

**Accommodation**

- The toilet facilities for children in the main school building are not satisfactory.
- There are a number of mobile classrooms without adjoined toilets for the children and this requires the younger children to be escorted by an adult to an outside toilet block. This is disruptive to learning, impedes the development of independence in younger children and creates particular difficulties during inclement weather.

**The matters listed in health and safety and/or accommodation above were also raised in the Inspection Letter which issued after the incomplete inspection in March 2012 and remain to be addressed.**

## BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School:** St Joseph's Convent Primary                      iii. **Date of Inspection:** W/B 14/01/13  
 ii. **School Reference Number:** 503-1340                      iv. **Nature of Inspection:** Focused

B.

School Year	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Year 1 Intake	58	55	41	61	65
<b>Enrolments</b>					
Primary	480	453	427	425	393
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	52	53	52	54	52
Special Unit	19	22	27	-	32
Irish Medium Unit	-	0	-	-	0

The enrolment for the current year is the figure on the day of notification of inspection.  
 For previous years it is the figure in the annual return to the Department of Education.

The calculations at C and D should be based on the total of the primary and reception enrolments only.

- C. Average Attendance for the Previous School Year  
 (expressed as a percentage): 94.1%                      **NI Avg Att: 94.7%**

Average Attendance for those children on the  
 Special Educational Needs Register: 92%

<b>Primary &amp; Reception</b>	<b>Nursery Unit</b>	<b>Special Unit</b>	<b>Irish Medium Unit</b>
------------------------------------	-------------------------	-------------------------	------------------------------

- D. i. Number of Teachers  
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 18                      2                      3                      0  
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 21.8                      NI PTR: 20.2
- iii. Average Class Size: 24.5
- iv. Class Size (Range): 20 to 31
- v. Ancillary Support:  
 Number of Hours **Per Week:**
- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| i. Clerical support:  | 67.75 |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support:           | 125   |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 67.5  |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 9.85%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 21.17%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 33.96%
- x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2011/12 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics, and Irish (in Irish-medium schools):
- |                |                    |              |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------|
| <b>English</b> | <b>Mathematics</b> | <b>Irish</b> |
| 73.44%         | 71.21%             | N/A          |

## STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON ST JOSEPH'S CONVENT NURSERY SCHOOL

### 1. Details of Children

<b>Number of children:</b>	<b>Class 1</b>	<b>Class 2</b>
Attending full-time	26	26
Attending part-time	0	0
Under 3 years of age*	0	0
With statement of special educational needs	0	0
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	1	2
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	1	2
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	0	0
With English as an additional language	4	4

\* On 1 July.

\*\* The stages refer to those set out in the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	100%
Average attendance for the previous year.	91.8%

### 2. Duration of Sessions

<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time: am</b>	<b>Part-time: pm</b>
4½ hours	-	-

### 3. Details of Staff

<b>Number of:</b>	<b>Full-Time</b>	<b>Part-Time</b>
Teachers	2	0
Nursery Assistants (qualified)	2	0
Nursery Assistants (non-qualified)	0	0

<b>Number of: ***</b>	
Students	0
Trainees	0

\*\*\* Total placements since September of current year

### 4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued	
Percentage returned	%
Number of written comments	

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