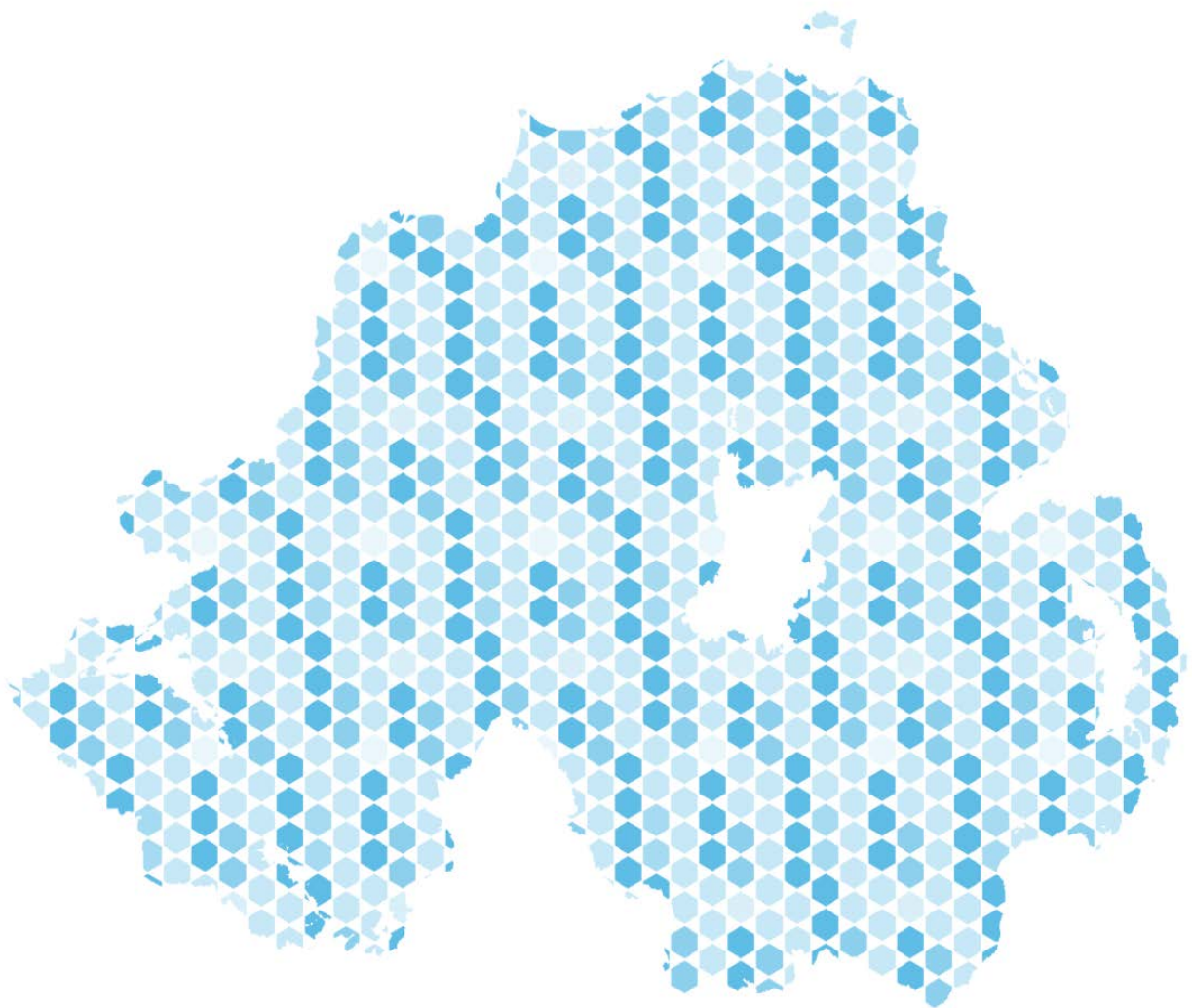


INDEPENDENT INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Living Rivers Christian School,
Ballymena, Co Antrim

Report of an Inspection in
May 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
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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%

Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels in reports:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

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1. Inspection method and evidence base

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of primary and post-primary schools, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the Inspectorate's publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self evaluation* at: <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-primary.htm>.

It should be noted that independent schools are not obliged to follow the Northern Ireland Curriculum and may employ teachers who do not hold teaching qualifications recognised by the Department of Education. Further details of the nature of the curriculum offered and the teaching qualifications held by the staff are included in this report.

Inspectors observed teaching and learning, scrutinised documentation and the learners' 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 representatives from the governors; and
- meetings with groups of pupils.

2. Context

Living Rivers Christian School is a co-educational independent school catering for learners aged from 4 to 18. It is situated in the town of Ballymena with the majority of pupils attending the school coming from the greater Ballymena area. The school, opened in September 2000, was last inspected in November 2008. It is administered by Living Rivers Church and is funded through fees and gifts. The staff comprise the principal, two learning centre supervisors and 3 part-time volunteers, none of whom hold a recognised teaching qualification. The supervisors and principal have undergone the compulsory training to administer the course. The school works with the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) curriculum which focuses on individual learning through a self-contained, self-instructional system. There are 2 classes, one currently comprising year 1 children and the other class ranging in age from 6 to 18.

Living Rivers Christian Independent School	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	13	15	14	13
% Attendance	97.2	96.0	94.2	-
FSME Percentage ¹	0	0	*	0
No. of newcomers	*	*	*	*

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

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

3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the learners' achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy, in particular, how the school is addressing low attainment and under-achievement where applicable;
- whether the accommodation is suitable and meets health and safety standards;
- the quality of provision in the school, with a particular focus on the implementation of the procedures for safeguarding and pastoral care; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

The inspection outcome is based on an evaluation of the Safeguarding and Child Protection arrangements, Health and Safety and accommodation.

Inspection Outcome	Satisfactory
Registration recommended	Yes

4. Achievements and standards

- The pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are proud of their school and respectful towards staff and visitors, highly motivated to learn and settle quickly to their work demonstrating very good organisational skills, levels of independence and engagement in their learning.
- In the ABC learning centre, comparable to foundation stage, play-based learning promotes the development of the pupils' oral skills and helps to develop the pupils' confidence. As they progress through the school the development of the pupils' talking and listening is supported in the less formal afternoon activities. The school needs to ensure that group discussion and pair work is appropriately structured and opportunities are planned in order to develop appropriately the pupils' oral responses.
- The pupils write with increasing accuracy and at a level at least appropriate to their age as they progress through the school. There are good examples of extended and independent writing across the curriculum.
- The pupils acquire basic reading skills through the development of a phonological awareness programme in the first two years of schooling. Reading skills are further developed independently as they progress through the school, and are promoted by sustained silent reading. During the inspection a small group of pupils were observed reading aloud from a range of texts with fluency. In order to promote reading further, the school has identified the need to provide a wider range of genre and more appropriate resources.

- The pupils gain appropriate knowledge and understanding of key mathematical concepts. As they progress, the most able are secure in their understanding of number and place value, and can apply their mathematical knowledge competently. When encouraged, they can draw on a range of strategies to complete accurately mental calculations. Development of practical activities and opportunities to talk about mathematics would improve further the pupils' flexible thinking in problem-solving and problem-posing tasks.
- The small numbers of leavers over the last four years have demonstrated success in the International Certificate of Christian Education (ICCE) and have been successful in continuing their studies at further education colleges or university, or in entering suitable employment.

5. Provision

- All pupils follow a compulsory core curriculum of mathematics, science, social studies, bible reading and English, including literature, creative writing and word building. In addition to the core curriculum, older pupils study computing and have the opportunity to study ACE programme electives, in subjects such as art, business, nutritional science, French or Spanish and government and constitutional studies.
- In the mornings, pupils work systematically through a series of workbooks called Packages of Accelerated Christian Education (PACE), at their own speed and ability level. The content is appropriate for the various age ranges and is well matched to the pupils' capabilities. The pupils work independently and conscientiously at individual work stations, setting their own daily goals and marking their own work in consultation with the supervisors. The volume of work completed is regarded by the school above average for their age. Daily devotion and prayer at the start of each day includes the opportunity for the pupils to present a range of research topics to their classmates. In the afternoons, a supplementary enrichment programme is provided where pupils work together as a whole class, or in groups or pairs, with whole-class direction by the supervisors. Provision enables pupils to interact with others, take part in group discussion and more varied approaches to learning.
- Good systems are in place to track pupils' progress through the ACE programme. The marking of ACE activities is systematic and rigorous and identifies the progress being made across the ACE curriculum. Pupils test themselves at the end of each unit of work, the supervisor moderates the work and administers a summative test.
- The school has developed effective communication with parents through, for example, the use of the 'communication' book for the youngest pupils and regular progress reports for the rest.
- Pastoral care in the school is a key strength. The safe and nurturing ethos is underpinned by the mutual respect and pride in the school and reflects the school's Christian values that permeate all aspects of school life. The pupils respond positively to the reward systems that motivate and encourage them.

- The pupils participate in weekly swimming or gym lessons and parents are encouraged to support the promotion of healthily eating.
- The accommodation is well maintained and provides a safe learning environment for the pupils. The school is incorporated within the building of the Living Rivers Church and makes regular use of the facilities for additional activities such as physical education and to host guest speakers.

7. Leadership and management

- The school is part of Living Rivers Trust and reports to trustees at least twice a year through a recently-formed local school governance team. The school governance team meet regularly and receive and discuss reports on a wide range of aspects of the provision including educational and social progress, pastoral care, finance and future development plans, and are currently identifying priorities for further school development.
- The leadership of the school is dedicated and committed to the life of the school and to the well-being of the pupils. There are good working relationships established with staff, parents and pupils, to ensure a positive ethos and a strong commitment to pastoral care.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of inspection, the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding pupils. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. In discussions with the inspectors, the pupils reported that they felt very secure and happy in school and knew what to do if they had any concerns about their well-being.

8. Conclusion

On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the quality of provision in relation to health and safety, safeguarding/child protection and accommodation is satisfactory. The school should continue to be registered to provide education.

Accommodation

1. The classrooms do not have visual access panels on the doors.

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