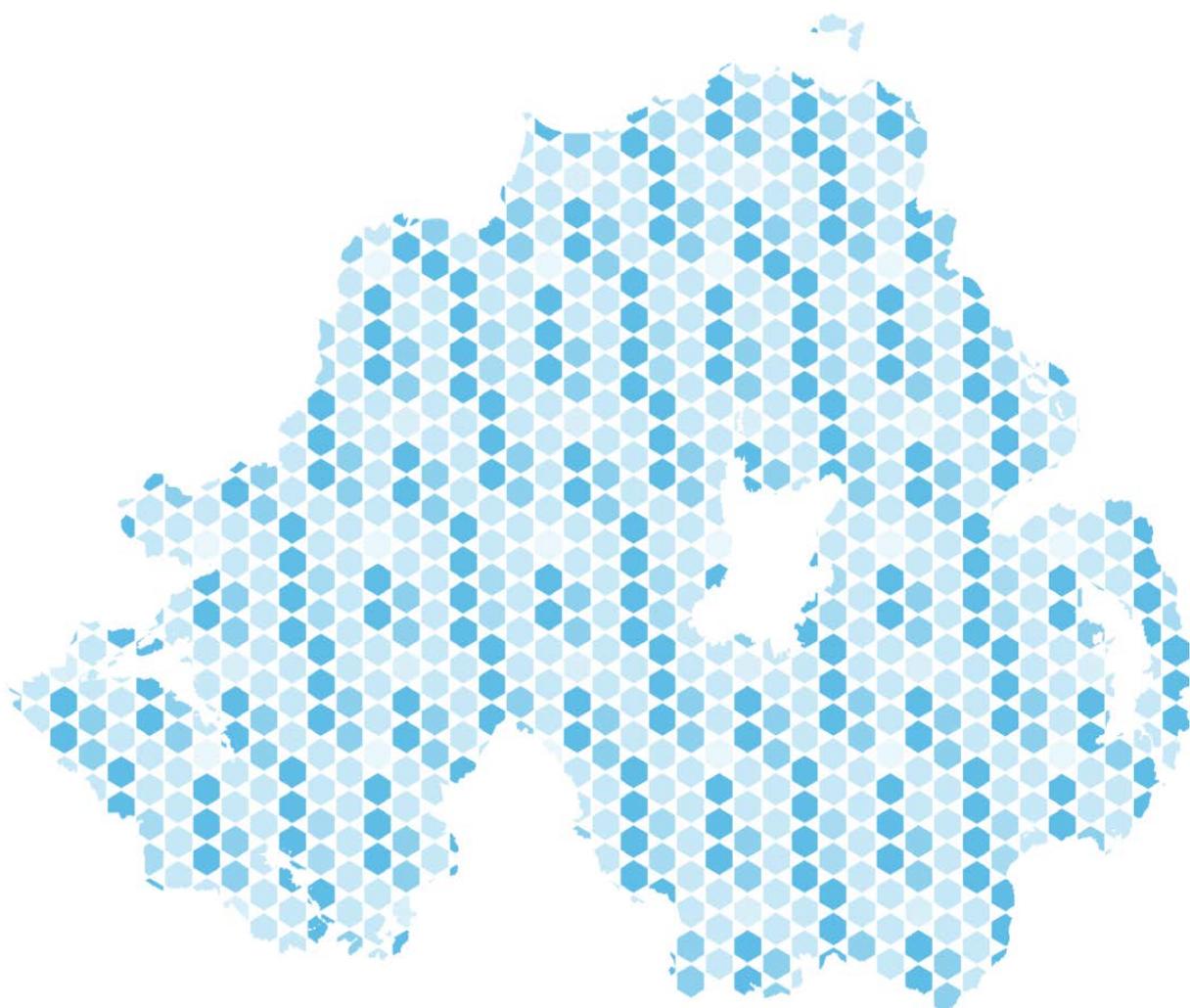


# INDEPENDENT INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Rockport School, Hollywood,  
Co Down

A co-educational independent 3-16 school

Report of an Inspection in  
May 2015

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*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

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 Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) publications *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self evaluation* at: <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-primary.htm> for primary and for post-primary at <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-post-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.

During the inspection, the 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 two governors;
- a meeting with a group of parents; and,
- a meeting with a group of pupils from Years 6, 10 and 12.

## **2. Context**

Rockport School is situated on the shore of Belfast Lough between Belfast and Bangor. The pupils attending the school range from ages 3 to 18 and come mainly from Northern Ireland; a minority attend the school from overseas. Currently there are 187 pupils enrolled of whom 25 board either on a full-time or weekly basis. At the time of the inspection there were fourteen nationalities represented within the school population.

The school became a member of the Round Square organisation in January 2014. Round Square is a world-wide association of schools that makes a strong commitment, beyond academic excellence, to personal development and responsibility. The Round Square approach promotes the six "IDEALS" of internationalism, democracy, environment, adventure, leadership and service which are central to the Rockport curriculum where pupils have regular opportunities to participate in local and international projects. In addition, the school is a member of the 16+ Group in the Independent Association of Preparatory Schools, the Boarding Schools' Association and Boarding Northern Ireland, which represents each of the five boarding schools in Northern Ireland.

All of the teaching staff in this school are educated to at least first degree level and have a recognised teaching qualification. Since the last inspection in January 2008 a new headmaster and deputy head teacher have been appointed.

Rockport School	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Enrolment	187	182	178
% Attendance	n/a	94.7%	93.9%
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	*	*	*
% of children on SEN register	31%	27%	27%
No. of children with statements of educational needs	9	10	7

**Source:** data as held by the school.

\* fewer than 5

### 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.**

<b>Inspection Outcome</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Registration recommended</b>	<b>Yes</b>

### Key findings of the inspection

#### 4. Achievements and standards

- The unique school environment, comprising pupils from a wide age range and from a number of different nationalities, develops well the pupils' dispositions and interpersonal skills. They interact confidently and maturely with their peers and with adults. When completing tasks set by their teachers, they display very good levels of independence and persistence and are take personal responsibility for working with others in group activities. Throughout the inspection, the pupils were friendly, courteous and respectful.
- The school's internal performance data shows that by the end of key stage 2 the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, achieve very well in English and mathematics.

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

- At key stage 4, pupils follow tailored pathways with a focus on meeting the individual needs of every pupil. All pupils have opportunities to gain GCSE qualifications in a range of subjects including: additional mathematics, additional science, art and design, biology, business studies, chemistry, child development, drama, English language, English literature, French, geography, history, home economics, information technology, learning for life and work (LLW), mathematics, media studies, music, physical education, physics, science and Spanish.
- An analysis of the outcomes at GCSE level shows that pupils entered for public examinations are achieving very well. In two of the past three years, the pupils attaining A\*-C in five GCSE subjects including English and mathematics has been above the Northern Ireland average for non-selective schools; in one year, the pupils attaining A\*-C in five GCSE subjects including English and mathematics has been in line with the Northern Ireland average for non-selective schools.
- Over the past three years, nearly three-fifths of the school leavers progress to other schools to take A level or equivalent qualifications and approximately one-third go on to take a range of courses in further education colleges.

## **5. Provision**

- Most of the lessons observed during the inspection were good or better and almost half were very good or outstanding. The most effective practice was characterised by well-paced and appropriately challenging activities; skilful questioning to develop the pupils' knowledge, understanding and thinking skills; and, effective plenary sessions to consolidate the learning, all underpinned by warm, supportive relationships and interactions within the classroom. In the less effective practice, in a minority of the lessons observed, there is variation in the quality of the planning; specifically, in planning for the range of abilities within the class to ensure that all of the pupils make the progress of which they are capable.
- The use of assessment to inform planning, learning and teaching, including the use of written and oral marking for improvement, has been appropriately identified by the school as an area for development. It will be important for the school to disseminate more consistently, through staff development, the effective practice that exists.
- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are supported well by their teachers and classroom assistants in small classes. Individual pupil profiles outline clearly the pupils' learning needs and a wide range of learning and teaching strategies to be employed to support their varied learning, social and emotional needs.
- Most of the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning receive regular individual tuition in 'The Cottage' from two specialist learning support teachers who work closely with the teaching and boarding staff, parents and a wide range of external agencies to monitor and review the pupils' progress. The staff have identified appropriately the need to develop further the provision through the development and implementation of individual education plans with shorter term targets in order to monitor more rigorously the progress of the pupils.

- The school provides high-quality pastoral care which is underpinned by an effective collegial whole-school approach. A clear sense of order and a strong inclusive ethos permeates clearly the life of the school. The very good quality of the pastoral care extends to the parents, including parents of newly-enrolled pupils through, for example, the excellent induction arrangements and their inclusion within the school community.
- The school is developing well its links with the surrounding community. The many opportunities provided to engage in a range of extra-curricular activities, including musical and sporting activities, and to perform in public, enrich greatly the pupils' learning experiences and build very well the pupils' self-esteem. The older pupils expressed a high degree of pride in their school and are positive role models for their younger peers. The School Council provides an effective platform for the pupils to participate in the work of the school community.
- The staff work effectively to ensure that vulnerable pupils with personal, social, emotional and health issues are safe, and that they are helped to overcome barriers to their learning. It is timely that the work of the school is focusing on linking more closely together the pupils' personal, social and academic progress. The inspection endorses this priority which is already being worked on by the senior leadership team.
- The extensive and picturesque school grounds are used effectively to promote the pupils' physical and social development through, for example, pupil participation in forest school, camping and beach projects. The classrooms are well-resourced, bright and attractive. The recent refurbishment of the science laboratories has improved greatly the learning environment for the teaching of science up to GCSE.
- The leaders are proactively researching ways to secure access to the school buildings and have identified appropriately the need to conduct an independent risk assessment of the current accommodation and grounds to ensure the school meets fully the minimum health and safety requirements.

## **6. Leadership and management**

- The senior leadership team is highly committed to developing further the pupils' academic and personal achievements, ensuring the pupils have a keen sense of responsibility and service towards others and to the environment by the time that they leave for the next stage of their education. The senior leadership team is supported well by a steering committee comprising each of the faculty heads and the head of early years. Together, they have identified appropriately through self-evaluation, which the inspection endorses, the need to make better use of the school's internal assessment data to monitor the performance of the pupils and track their progress in order to inform and effect further improvements in the standards they achieve.

- The school is in the last year of the three year development plan cycle. During the last three years a range of appropriately identified targets have been met, including a 20/20 vision of the future accommodation needs of the school, an application to the Round Square organisation, the development of post 16 provision and the introduction of a range of assessment methods to track the pupils' performance. In preparing the new school development plan it will be important for the school to continue to prioritise strategic areas for development through rigorous self-evaluation.
- The governors have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They receive regular and detailed reports from the senior leadership team on important aspects of the school's provision including finance, accommodation, health and safety, child protection, curriculum provision and assessment which informs the strategic direction of the school. Of particular note is the close partnership between the staff, governors, parents and the wider community through, for example, the parent teachers association and regular social events, which contributes positively to the family ethos of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspectors met with a group of parents who articulated very high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the educational and pastoral provision provided by the school. In particular, they highlighted the welcoming, inclusive learning environment created by the approachable staff; the excellent communication through progress reports and regular meetings; the wide range of high quality indoor and outdoor learning experiences available to pupils; and, the progress evident in their children's learning and development.
- 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. During the inspection, the inspectors met with a group of pupils from a range of year groups. The pupils spoke with enthusiasm and confidence about their experiences in school. They reported that they feel happy and safe in school and know what to do if they have any concerns.

## **7. Conclusion**

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

**Health and safety**

- There is a need to review access arrangements to the main building and the classrooms.
- There is a need to review access arrangements to the school grounds from the coastal path gate.

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