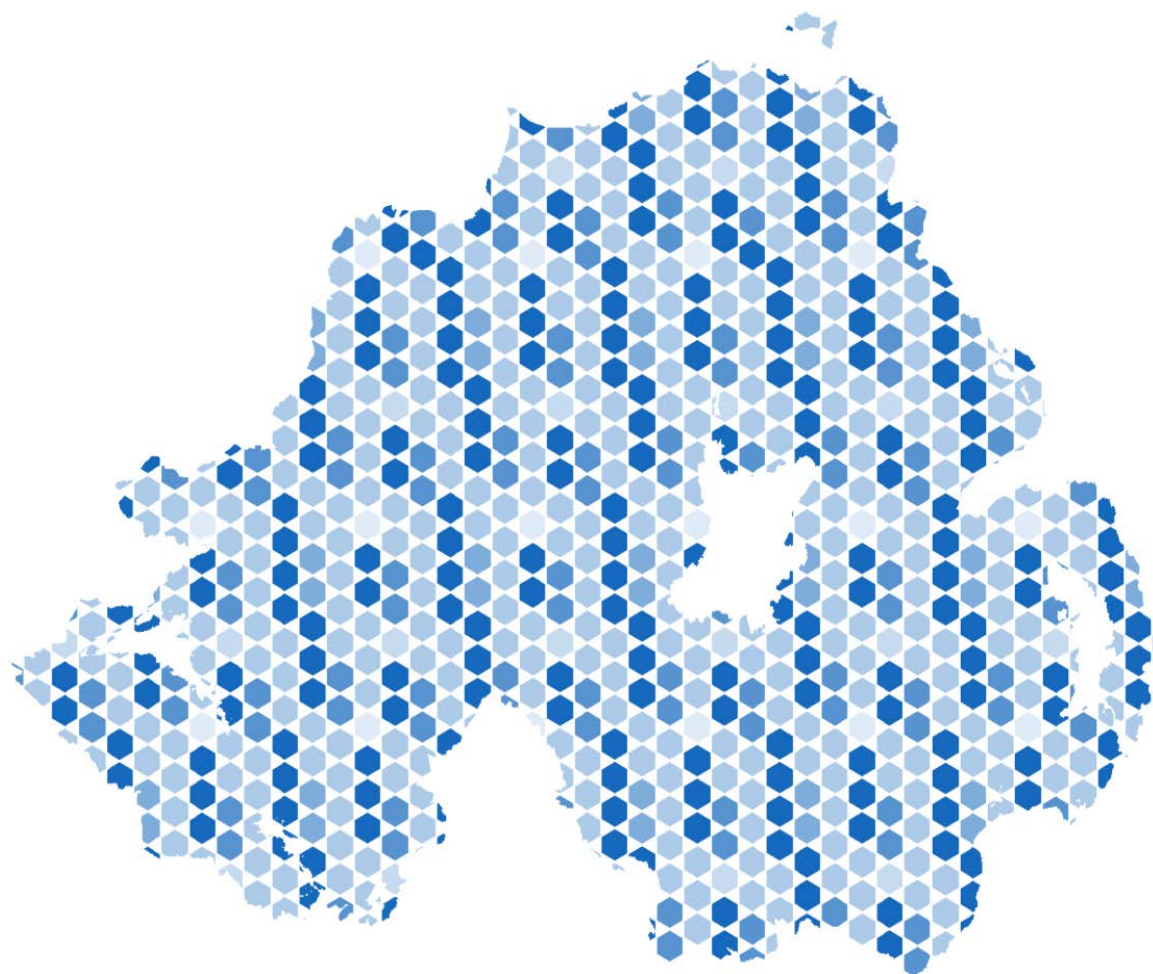


SPECIAL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Ardmore House School,
Downpatrick, Co Down

Report of an Inspection in
October 2013

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

Contents

Section	Page
1. Inspection method and evidence base	1
2. Context	1
3. Focus of inspection	2
4. Overall finding	2
5. Achievements and standards	2
6. Provision	3
7. Leadership and management	4
8. Conclusion	5
Appendix	

1. Inspection method and evidence base

Inspectors observed teaching and learning, scrutinised documentation and the pupils' 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;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	12	*	*	*
Teachers	12	6	50	*
Support Staff	6	*	*	*

* fewer than 5

The ETI is trialling a range of methods for collecting the views of parents/carers about the life and work of the school. As a result, the response rate to the parent/carer questionnaires may be low.

All of the parental questionnaire responses are positive. The parents value the progress made by their children and the kind and supportive ethos throughout the school. There were no areas of concern additional comments were very supportive and positive of the staff and school.

The teacher and support staff questionnaire responses were very positive, and indicate strong support for the Principal and life of the school.

2. Context

Ardmore House School is situated in Downpatrick and serves a wide catchment area which includes County Down and the Ards Peninsula. The school provides highly specialised education for 12 key stage (KS) 3 pupils, with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The pupils attend the school for a one term period of assessment and support and most return to full-time mainstream education and receive ongoing support for a period of time to maintain their placement.

In 2011, the school established extended provision for up to six pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties who require intensive support and where re-integration to a mainstream school is not appropriate. In addition, the school provides an outreach service to 30 schools to support 360 pupils with similar difficulties to maintain their mainstream school placement. All teachers in the school provide outreach support in addition to teaching in the school. The number of pupils attending the school has increased by 50% due to the development of the extended provision and there has been a significant increase of approximately 57% in the number of pupils requiring outreach support since 2007.

Ardmore House School	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Enrolment	12	17	18	14
% Attendance (NI Average)	75.3%	71.1%	69.2%	-
FSME Percentage ¹	46%	71%	51%	57%
No. of newcomers	0	0	0	0

Source: data as held by the school.

3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the pupils' achievements and standards,
- the quality of provision in the school [and outreach provision]; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

4. Overall finding

Overall Performance Level	Good
Achievements and Standards	Very Good
Provision	Good
Leadership and Management	Good

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The pupils make very good progress in their education and behaviour despite coming to the school with histories of behaviour difficulty, disrupted education and school absence. The majority of the pupils consistently meet their behaviour and learning targets and by the time they complete their education in the school, they have developed strategies to cope with their social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- Most of the pupils are well motivated and able to work independently and with others for some of the time. They respond well to the interesting learning opportunities presented by their teachers and display pride in their work and a willingness to improve further. The school places a clear focus on promoting skills and learning dispositions.
- All of the pupils make good progress in literacy and overall show significant improvement in their learning and demonstrate sustained engagement with education and enjoyment of learning.

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

- The pupils achieve very good levels of competence in using information and communication technology (ICT) and benefit from the creative and innovative use of ICT across a range of subject areas.

6. Provision

- The school has established a well developed separate, extended provision for a small number of pupils with complex needs and behaviour. Most of the pupils settle quickly to work and respond appropriately to staff who have a clear understanding of their needs and difficulties.
- The quality of interaction between pupils and staff is generally very good, with mutual respect and tolerance a feature. Throughout the day the staff provide frequent positive feedback to the pupils on their engagement and progress. All staff are consistent in the use of the reward system and positive behaviour strategies.
- The quality of teaching is very good in the majority of lessons observed; the pupils are provided with a balanced curriculum which reflects very well their interests and social and emotional needs.
- The teachers' short and medium term planning identifies clearly the intended learning and differentiated activities with detailed observations and evaluations which inform future planning and assessment of the pupils' learning. The daily pupil review and planning meetings ensure that all the teachers can contribute to assessments, evaluations and planning for pupils. The classroom assistants contribute effectively to the daily planning and assessment of the pupils' learning.
- The staff use effectively an electronic system for detailed analysis of behaviour to engage pupils in discussions of their behaviour and to demonstrate progress to parents and schools. There is a strong focus on emotional literacy which assists and enhances each pupils' engagement with their learning and personal development.
- Literacy is given a high profile across the curriculum. The literacy co-ordinator has developed effective initiatives to support further the promotion of literacy skills across the school.
- In the outreach lessons observed in a sample of mainstream schools, the pupils engaged well, were well supported in their learning and made good progress. They were clear about the learning and behaviour targets and strategies they could use to manage their behaviour. Particular strengths are the teachers' excellent working relationships with pupils and the early intervention strategies that enable the pupils to remain in school or re-integrate successfully. The well planned outreach programmes meet effectively the needs of the pupils who consequently are more settled and improve their behaviour, however the school needs to provide mainstream schools with more detailed behavioural and learning strategies to ensure more consistent support for pupils experiencing difficulties.

- The quality of pastoral care in the school is very good and creates an effective climate for learning. The pupils talk about the high levels of care and support they receive from the staff. In particular, they enjoy the practical learning activities and excellent range of outdoor pursuits. All of the pupils are well settled into school, and are proud of the progress they make towards their targets. The pupils state that they feel safe in school and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being. There are regular formal opportunities for the pupils to express their preferences and opinions through the pupils' forum.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, the pupils have frequent and regular opportunities to participate in mountain biking, outdoor pursuits and archery. The innovative smoking cessation programme has been very effective in discouraging smoking and encouraging pupils to adopt a more healthy lifestyle.

7. Leadership and management

- The principal has a clear and realistic vision for the school. He provides good leadership for staff and pupils. He promotes effectively a strong collegial focus on the holistic development of the pupils which supports them in their engagement with education and positive interaction with staff and their peers. The senior management team need to develop a more detailed school development plan and a more rigorous system for curriculum planning, monitoring, evaluating and recording the effectiveness of the provision. At present the good practice and outcomes for pupils are not reflected in whole school evaluations. It is timely that the senior management team is revising the overall strategy for outreach provision, with an appropriate focus on supporting pupils to remain in their schools as part of an overall South Eastern Education and Library Board provision.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding young people, which reflect broadly the guidance issued by the Department of Education. There is a need for the school to carry out more rigorous risk assessments for offsite educational trips and to update the safeguarding training for the designated staff
- Based on the evidence at the time of inspection, the parents, staff and school community can have confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors contribute effectively to the further developments of the school and bring a high level of commitment to their role. They have indicated they would welcome further opportunities to have a challenge role in supporting school development planning.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of the education provided by this school is good and the pastoral care is very good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address. These are to develop:

- a more detailed school development plan to inform and guide school improvement; and
- a more rigorous system for curriculum planning, monitoring, evaluating and recording the effectiveness of the provision.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) will monitor the school's progress on the areas for improvement.

Accommodation

- There have been significant improvements to the fabric of the school buildings in recent years but some areas require further painting and decoration.
- The school car park is inadequate for the number of users currently on site.
- The facilities for Technology and Design are inadequate and require urgent improvement.

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