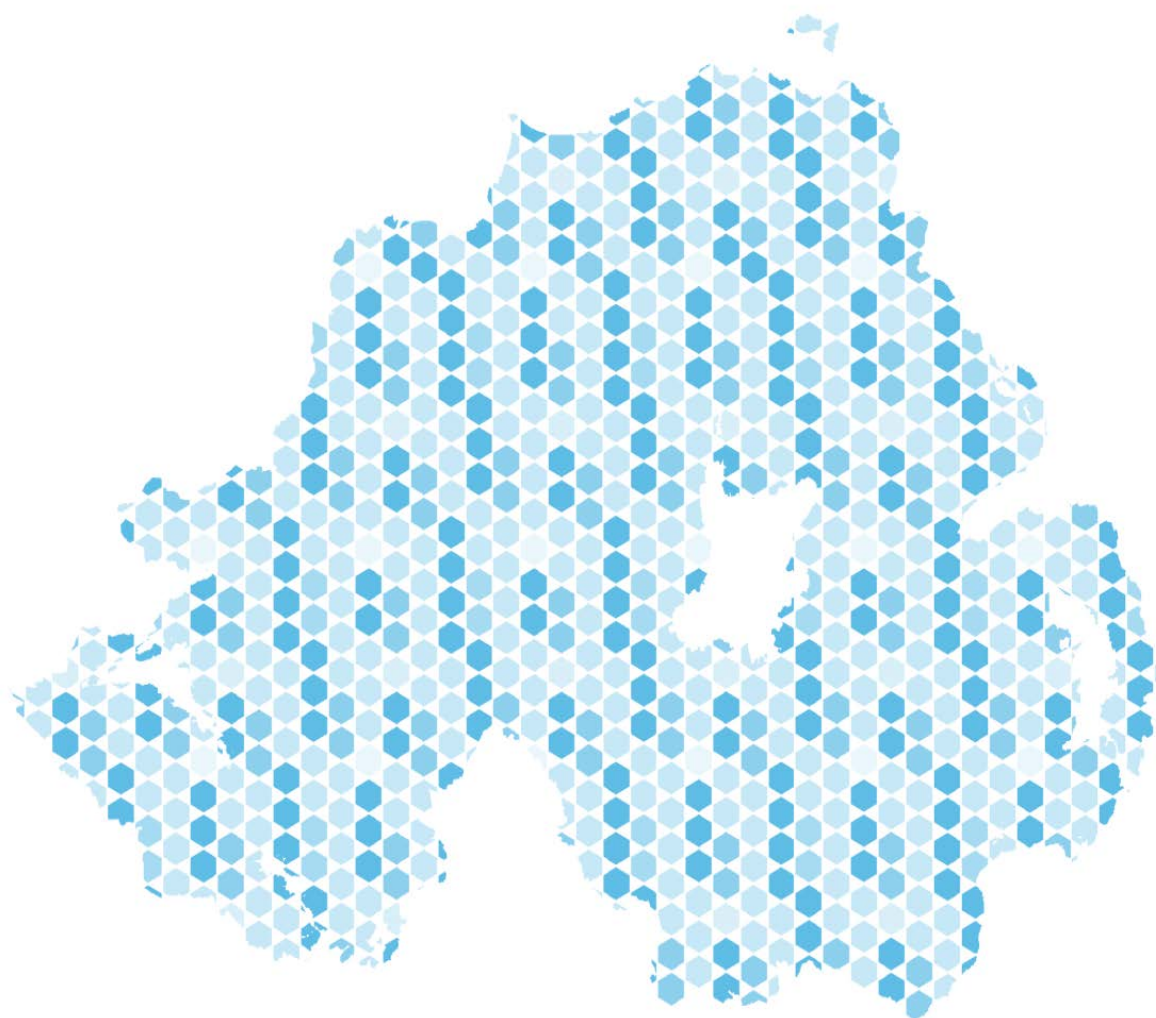


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Armstrong Primary School
and Learning Support Centre,
Armagh

Report of an Inspection
in October 2013



*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 schools, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self-evaluation* at: <http://www.eti.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-primary.htm>.

Inspectors observed teaching and learning, scrutinised documentation and the children's 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.

<i>Questionnaire</i>	<i>Number issued</i>	<i>Number returned</i>	<i>Percentage returned</i>	<i>Number with comments</i>
Parents	322	59	18%	37
Teaching staff	26	24	92%	17
Teaching support staff	23	13	56%	*
Support staff	*	*	*	*

* 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.

Almost all the responses from the parents were positive and praised the school for the welcoming and inclusive ethos, the attention placed on the welfare of the children, the high standards achieved by the children, including those with additional learning needs, and the approachable and friendly staff and principal. The responses of the teaching staff, teaching support staff and support staff were wholly positive and praised the guidance and support of the principal and the senior leadership team, including their attention to the welfare of staff, the shared vision for high expectations of the children's behaviour and achievements, and the opportunities for further professional development. The small number of concerns has been shared with the Principal and the Board of Governors.

2. Context

Armstrong Primary School is a controlled, co-educational primary school situated at College Hill, in the City of Armagh. There is a learning support centre (LSC) comprising of three classrooms. The school serves the City of Armagh together with an extensive rural hinterland. The enrolment has steadily increased over the past five years.

Armstrong Primary School	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Enrolment	371	390	432	462
% Attendance (NI Average)	94.90%	95.70%	95.00%	95.1%
FSME Percentage ¹	13.76%	18.45%	20.13%	20.13%
% (No) of children on SEN register	15.63%(58)	23.07%(90)	21.29%(92)	22.07%(102)
No. of children with statements of educational needs	15	15	11	17
No. of newcomers	15	21	27	35

Source: data as held by the school.

3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

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

4. Overall findings

Overall Performance Level	Outstanding
Achievements and Standards	Outstanding
Provision	Outstanding
Leadership and Management	Outstanding
Learning Support Centre	Outstanding

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children have well-developed thinking skills and personal capabilities and are able to self-manage their own learning. They ask questions, are suitably resilient to take appropriate risks to solve problems, collaborate well in group work and are able to work independently at appropriate levels within their individual range of abilities. By the end of key stage two, most of the children are

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

highly articulate; they are able to express their own ideas and offer their opinions in a respectful manner that reflects their good listening skills and empathy for the ideas of others. The children are confident in their use of mathematical language and can explain their reasoning and understanding of the associated concepts and strategies they use to solve mathematical problems.

- An analysis of the end of key stage two performance data, in the past three years*, shows that in English the school's performance has improved from below the Northern Ireland (NI) average in one year to in line with or above in the remaining two years. In mathematics, the school's performance is above the Northern Ireland (NI) average in each of the three years. Compared with schools in the same free school meals (FSM) category, the performance in mathematics is at, or above, the average, in each of the three years, and in English has improved from below the average to above the average for similar schools. The school's internal performance data shows that most of the children, including those who require additional help with aspects of their learning, make very good progress in English and mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation.
- The children who require additional help with their learning, including those in the learning support centre (LSC), achieve very well. By the end of key stage two, they make good progress in literacy and numeracy, show increasing self-confidence and are secure and happy in their classes. The overall progress of the children who require additional help with their learning is carefully monitored alongside their peers with an appropriate reference to their challenges and needs.
- The children's achievements and standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are excellent. The use of information and communication technology (ICT), particularly in the LSC and the foundation stage strengthens the children's multi-sensory learning and facilitates their communication, recall and memory skills. The children explore their feelings and emotions in plenary sessions which are well supported by digital media. The children in years 4 to 7 participate in the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessments (CCEA) ICT Accreditation Scheme, with almost all achieving the expected levels of attainment, and are able to apply a very good range of ICT skills throughout their learning processes.

6. Provision for learning

- There is a coherent whole-school approach to planning, teaching and assessment. The quality of the teaching observed ranged from good to outstanding. Most of the teaching was very good or outstanding. The teachers exploit very effectively the many meaningful contexts for learning that arise across the curriculum to develop further the children's literacy and numeracy skills, particularly through the use of music and physical education, the world around us and the personal development and mutual understanding curricula strands. The school has established a very effective framework for connected

* Due to the current transition period in the arrangements for statutory assessment, this analysis of the end of KS2 performance data is based on the outcomes up to but not including the 2012/13 school year. In addition, the school enrolment increased significantly in 2011 with children joining classes throughout the key stages.

learning which is well-matched to the needs of the learners, taking account of their ages and stages of development. The embedded culture of peer and self-assessment is evident throughout all key stages. The quality of the teachers' questioning and interaction sustains and develops learning across the curriculum.

- The quality of the provision for the children who require additional help with their learning is outstanding. The children benefit from the supportive, caring atmosphere in the LSC for moderate learning difficulties and for children with autistic spectrum disorder; and from the understanding of the particular educational and pastoral needs of these children, which the teachers, ably supported by the classroom assistants, bring to their work. The planning for special educational needs is integrated well across the school and the teachers use the detailed information provided by the special needs educational co-ordinator (SENCO) to guide their classroom practice. The teachers include every child in the lessons at a level appropriate to their individual need. They target aspects for development appropriate to those children with more complex and challenging needs and are vigilant in monitoring progress and praising success. Those children receiving withdrawal support in literacy and numeracy benefit from the lively, imaginative and well-paced teaching which is skilfully targeted at improving their standards.
- The quality of provision for pastoral care is outstanding. The school mission statement "learning today for living tomorrow" is fulfilled by the manner in which all staff support the holistic development of every child within in a welcoming, caring and inclusive school community. The children's confidence is developed through the wide range of educational visits, extra-curricular and enrichment activities. They have very good opportunities to contribute to the decision - making process within the school, including for example, the school council and eco council. The school has achieved the 'Welcoming Schools Award' at outstanding level.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, through the health education programme and a range of strategies to encourage the children to adopt, healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The principal provides clear, strategic leadership and management for the direction and development of the educational and pastoral needs of the school community. He leads by example and through the process of building leadership capacity has established a highly effective team in which the contribution of each member of staff is valued. The embedded culture of self-evaluation and action planning for improvement underpins all levels of school leadership; the staff set high expectations for the children's learning.
- The senior leadership team and co-ordinators willingly contribute with innovative and creative thinking to the whole-school development planning process and use appropriately a wide range of evidence, including performance data, to identify and address low and underachievement. There are excellent links and partnerships established through the LSC and outside agencies to ensure a cohesive and inclusive educational experience for all children.

- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the parents, staff and school community can have a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors have a broad range of skills which are appropriately deployed to ensure effective governance and management of the school; they apply their challenge function, support and advise the principal and the staff in the best interests of the children.
- Parents are encouraged to become involved in promoting their children's learning and they are encouraged to participate in school events and programmes to support learning. Assessment of the children's learning and development is thorough and detailed and parents are continually kept informed by a range of communications and the daily home-school diaries in the LSC.
- 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. In discussions with the inspectors, the year 6 children reported that they feel very secure in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their well-being.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The school has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

Accommodation

- The allocation of the number of parking spaces is too low to accommodate the increased numbers of staff.

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