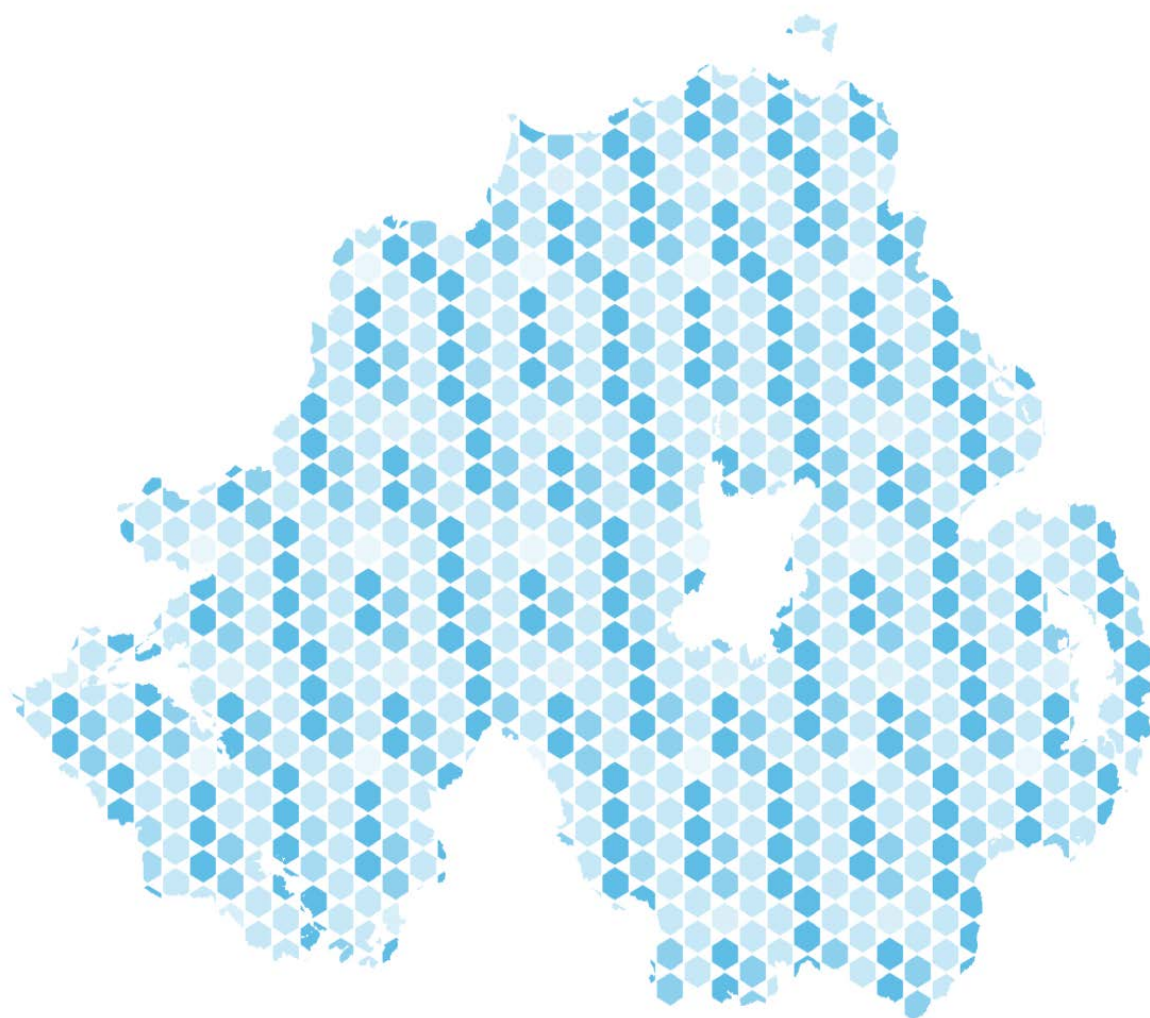


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Gilnahirk Primary School,
Belfast

Report of an Inspection in
May 2014

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
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

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

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.etini.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.

Questionnaire	Number issued (total number in the school per category)	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	285	39	13.7%	22
Teaching staff	16	13	81.3%	*
Support staff	21	9	42.9%	*

* fewer than 5

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) is trialling a range of methods for collecting the views of parents about the life and work of the school. As a result, the response rate to the parental questionnaire may be low.

The responses to the parental questionnaires indicated very high levels of support for and appreciation of the work of the school. The parents commented on the friendly atmosphere, the creative and caring manner in which the children are taught and the teachers who inspire an enthusiasm for learning.

Most of the teachers and a significant minority of support staff completed questionnaires and their responses were very positive; they emphasised their profound interest in the children's learning, and how, as staff, they feel valued and appreciated. They state they are enabled to contribute to school improvement. The analysis of the questionnaires, including a small number of concerns raised, was shared with the principal and representatives of the board of governors.

2. Context

Gilnahirk Primary School is situated in east Belfast, and is celebrating its 175th anniversary this year. The enrolment of the school has remained steady over the past four years and currently stands at 407 children. At the time of the inspection, approximately 15% of the children were entitled to receive free school meals and 25% of the children were identified as requiring additional support with their learning.

Gilnahirk Primary School	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Enrolment	412	410	401	407
% Attendance	96.5%	96.6%	97.2%	96.3%
FSME Percentage ¹	10.67%	12.96%	17.2%	15.23%
% of children on SEN register	17.23%	20.24%	16.70%	24.57%
No. of children with statements of educational needs	9	9	8	10
No. of newcomers	10	7	5	*

Source: data as held by the school.

*fewer than 5

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 finding

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

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are well motivated and their behaviour is exemplary. They engage enthusiastically with the activities provided and manage effectively their own learning. A particular strength is their ability to work independently and to express themselves confidently when talking about their work. The children work productively in paired and group activities, listening and responding thoughtfully to the views of others. Across the three key stages (KS), the innovative use of collaborative learning approaches is developing to a high standard the children's thinking skills and personal capabilities. The Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) programme supports well the development of confident children, who progress very successfully in their skills, attitudes and emotional awareness.

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

- An analysis of the end of key stage (KS) 2 performance data, in three of the past four years, shows that the school's performance is consistently above the Northern Ireland average and well exceeds the average for schools in the same free school meals category in both English and mathematics². The school's internal performance data shows that almost all of the children, including those who require additional support with their learning, make outstanding progress in English and mathematics in line with their ability, or above expectation.
- Overall, the children achieve outstanding standards in literacy. The children listen respectfully to one another and modify their thinking in response to the opinions of their peers; their ability to communicate orally is a particular strength. The children talk about, plan, draft, edit and present their work for different audiences and purposes and to a very good standard. They write in meaningful contexts with increasing grammatical accuracy, independence and flair. The children's written work is celebrated in attractive, creative and stimulating displays in the classrooms and the corridors. By the end of year 7, the most able children read with fluency and accuracy and show a keen interest in their novels and the short stories they have written for the younger children.
- The children display an evident enjoyment of mathematics. They use appropriate mathematical language with fluency and demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the mathematics curriculum. By the end of KS 2, the most able children have an outstanding knowledge of a wide range of mathematical concepts and are highly flexible in their mathematical thinking and computation. These notable standards reflect the appropriately high expectations which the teachers set for the children.
- The children achieve outstanding standards in information and communication technology (ICT), including attainment in external accreditation. They have well-planned opportunities to use an increasing range of digital media which support and extend their learning in all areas of the curriculum.

6. Provision

- The quality of almost all of the learning and teaching was good or better, with a majority of the lessons being very good or outstanding. The teaching is characterised by the high and realistic degree of challenge set within lessons by almost all of the teachers. In the best practice, the learning intentions and success criteria are used effectively to structure the lessons, the plenary sessions are skilful and the children are allowed sufficient time to reflect on and to consolidate their learning. Similarly, the planning takes due account of the children's differing needs, with reflective evaluations of their previous learning, which the teachers use well to inform future learning.
- The children's work is marked regularly to encourage, support and inform learning. In most classes, the teachers' written feedback acknowledges appropriately the children's successes and provides clear guidance for improvement. There is evidence from a scrutiny of the children's written work that the children evaluate accurately their own work, and use the thoughtful verbal and written comments from the teachers to improve through correcting and learning from their mistakes.

² 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.

- The children who require additional support with their learning are monitored closely and are well informed about how they are progressing with their learning. A particular strength is the 'target parties' which celebrate the achievements of the children. The children are well integrated into their classes and receive effective support both in the classroom and through withdrawal sessions for literacy and numeracy. The classroom assistants and learning support staff work closely with the teachers to meet sensitively and thoughtfully the individual needs of the children.
- The teachers have a comprehensively planned programme for literacy, making very effective use of a variety of strategies to support reading which are implemented consistently. The children are given choices, direct their own learning, and they demonstrate a very good ability to write in different styles for different purposes and audiences. There is a very good framework for progression in talking and listening, reading and writing which ensures that the children's experiences are challenging and set within meaningful contexts.
- In numeracy, the children access a wide range of experiences with an appropriate emphasis on problem-solving and investigative activities set in real life contexts. The teachers make very good use of practical activities to develop the children's mathematical thinking and language and to consolidate and extend their knowledge. In the best practice, information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively to consolidate the children's learning.
- There is a well-developed ethos of inclusion and respect across the school community. The children's opinions are listened to, valued and acted upon by the staff and the governors. In addition, they avail of many appropriate opportunities to evaluate the quality of their experiences, to negotiate with the staff and to make decisions which influence school life. The staff have developed an effective 'buddy' system that gives the year 7 children a sense of responsibility for the care and support of the younger children.

7. Leadership and management

- The principal and the school leadership team provide outstanding leadership. They have a well-conceived, collegial vision for school improvement focused clearly on achieving the highest possible standards for all of the children.
- The co-ordinators are highly knowledgeable about their areas of responsibility, and are fully committed to the on-going improvement of the standards the children attain. The school's data, including benchmarked data and internal performance data, is used systematically and rigorously to track the progress and assess the standards which each child reaches. The teachers are fully accountable for ensuring that, where necessary, suitable intervention programmes are in place for children who require additional help with their learning. For example, in class support, withdrawal sessions and support from outside agencies.
- The staff have developed an outstanding range of purposeful and beneficial partnerships with the local community and other schools and agencies. For example, the collaborative partnership with Our Lady and Saint Patrick's College, Belfast is a particular strength in developing meaningful lessons in the science laboratories for the children. These well established links enhance and enrich

the quality and range of the children's learning experiences. There is an effective emphasis on the school playing an active role in the local community; the principal and board of governors encourage the community to make extensive use of the school premises. The innovative internship programme with Stranmillis University College, Belfast and the Barnardo's charity focuses effectively on underachievement through workshops and well structured lessons that entail the active involvement of the parents and the 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 well-informed governors challenge and support effectively the principal and staff with the implementation of the school development plan. They take a keen interest in the progress of the actions which are taken to promote improvement.
- 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 year six children. In discussions, the children spoke highly of the support they receive from their teachers and the wide range of after-school activities which they enjoy. They state that feel safe and cared for in school and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is outstanding. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement

Health and safety/Accommodation

- There is a need for the board of governors and principal to review and monitor regularly the access arrangements to the school site and buildings.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2014

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the ETI website: www.etini.gov.uk

