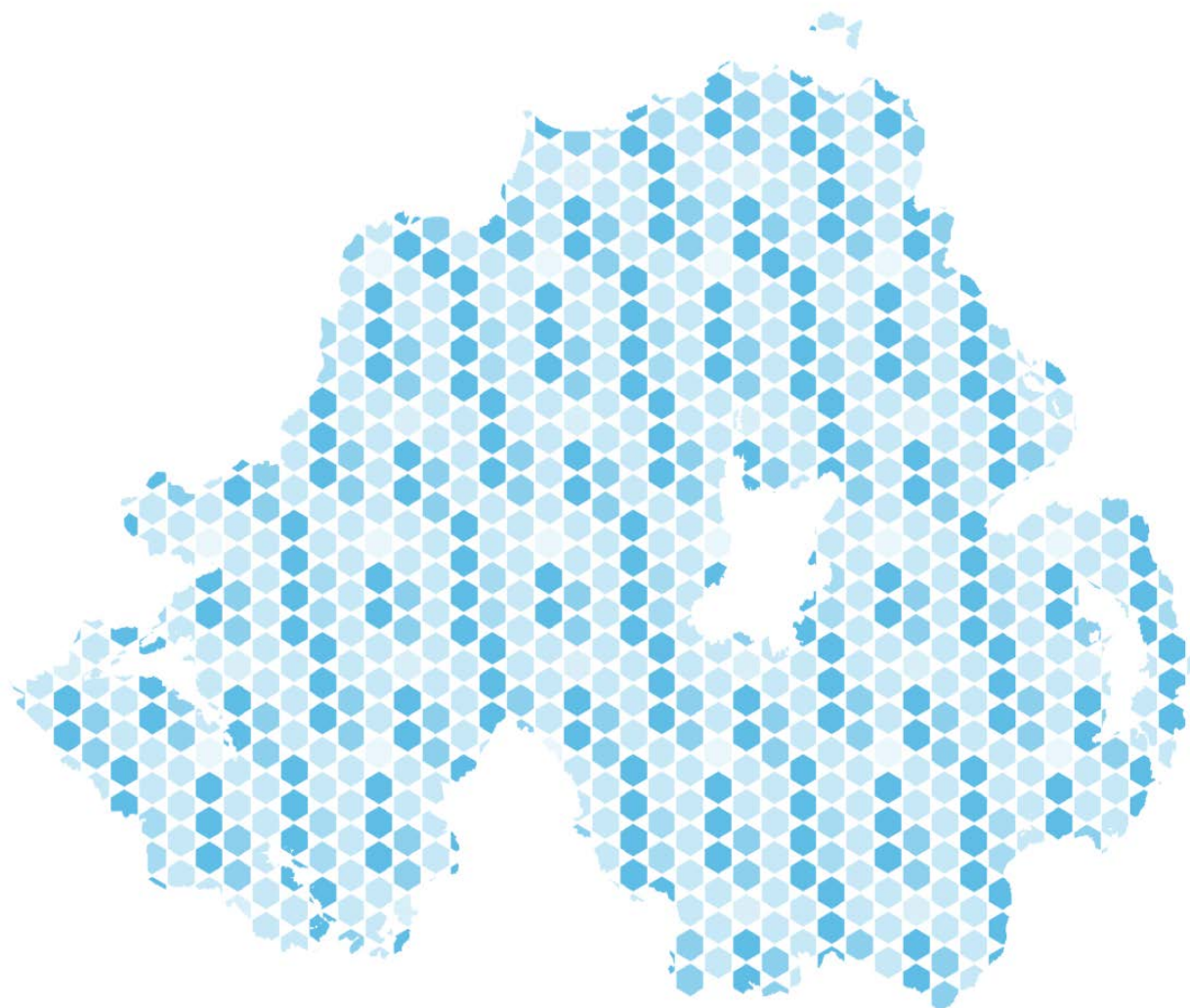


PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Harmony Hill Primary School
and Nursery Unit, Lisburn

Report of an Inspection in
April 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
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.

Twelve percent of parents and 55% of the teaching and non-teaching staff responded to the questionnaires. A small number of representatives from the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) within the school also met with the inspectors. The responses to both the parental and staff questionnaires were positive about all aspects of the life and work of the school. Their responses praised the broad range of learning experiences and opportunities available to the children, and the effective culture of teamwork and collegiality that exists at all levels within the school community; the latter sentiment was also voiced by the representatives of the PTA. The main messages and a small number of issues arising from the questionnaires were shared with the principal, vice-principal and representatives of the board of governors.

2. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

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

3. Context

Harmony Hill Primary School and Nursery Unit is situated on the outskirts of the city of Lisburn and serves the residential area of Lambeg. Most of the children attending the school live locally. The enrolment of the school has increased gradually over the last three years and currently stands at 591 children in the primary school and 52 in the nursery unit. The school has identified approximately 26% of the children as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning and approximately 13% of the children are entitled to free school meals.

Harmony Hill Primary School	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	537	518	556	591
% Attendance	95.67	95.71	96.07	95.40
FSME Percentage ¹	8.19	10.23	12.94	12.85
% of children on SEN register	20.48	19.69	19.78	25.54
No. of children with statements of educational needs	8	7	8	9
No. of newcomers	29	29	39	53

Source: data as held by the school.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall Performance Level	Good
Achievements and Standards	Good
Provision	Good
Leadership and Management	Good
Nursery Unit	Outstanding

5. Achievements and standards

- Throughout the school, the children are very well-behaved and are keen to learn. They listen attentively in class, are respectful of their teachers, each other and visitors. The children complete readily the learning tasks that the teachers set for them and when provided with stimulating and appropriately differentiated learning activities, they become more actively engaged in the lessons and demonstrate independence and flexibility in their learning and thinking.
- The school's internal performance data shows that: there is a steady year on year reduction in underachievement and, by the beginning of year 7, almost all of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make progress in English and mathematics in line with or above their ability.
- Across the key stages, most of the children attain very good standards in literacy. They work confidently on their own, in pairs and in groups and, when given the opportunity, give well-articulated extended responses in class discussions. The most able children read with fluency, skill and enjoyment and talk enthusiastically about their reading choices and the range of strategies they use when reading texts that are more challenging. In all year groups, the children are developing well their independent writing in a varied range of forms across the curriculum. From early in the foundation stage, the children are supported effectively to produce extended writing which is well-structured, includes content which is relevant and engaging, and contains an interesting variety of associated vocabulary. The presentation of the children's written work is variable across the classes; in the best examples, it is of a high standard.

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

- The standards achieved by the children in mathematics are satisfactory. Over the last three years, a minority of the children across the key stages have underachieved in mathematics. By year 7, the highest ability children understand the core mathematical concepts and explain their thinking using the correct mathematical language; however, they have limited flexibility in their mathematical thinking when attempting challenging problems. To raise the children's standards in mathematics the teachers need to provide more opportunities for the children to adapt and apply their mathematical learning in a variety of real-life and relevant contexts at a level matched to their ability.
- All of the children in the nursery unit are happy and confident and settle quickly to sustained, concentrated play. Their behaviour is exemplary. The children communicate well with each other and with adults; they play purposefully both independently and collaboratively; make choices about the activities in which they engage and the materials they use; and, demonstrate very high levels of independence. They participate fully in well-managed song, rhyme and story sessions and show imagination and creativity in their use of materials at the art, construction and role-play areas.
- The children use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively to enhance and display their learning across the curriculum, in particular, through their writing activities.

6. Provision

- A whole-school approach to planning across all learning areas guides appropriately the teachers in delivering a broad and balanced curriculum. The teachers mark the children's work regularly with positive comments and, in the best practice, provide clear indications of how the children can improve further the quality of their work. There has been a recent focus on the development of Connected Learning Units (CLU) within the school and, in the best practice, the teachers make good use of this cross-curricular planning to connect purposefully the children's learning across the curriculum. In order to improve further the quality of the provision, it will be important for the teachers to focus on improving the learning experiences of the children through, for example, the development of active learning strategies to promote further the children's thinking skills, independence and creativity. There is also a need to make more effective use of the school's internal data to inform better the differentiation in the lesson planning in order to meet better the wide range of abilities within each classroom.
- In the most effective practice, in a majority of the lessons, the activities were stimulating and well structured with an appropriate pace for learning. There was a clear focus on success criteria, and the teachers used effective questioning to stimulate and extend the children's thinking and consolidate their understanding. In the less effective practice, in a significant minority of the lessons observed, there was insufficient differentiation to meet the needs of all children and they were not given appropriate responsibility for their own learning.

- The teachers provide a supportive learning environment for literacy which celebrates the children's achievements in reading and writing. They plan effectively to: develop progressively the children's reading and writing skills to enable them to write using different forms; and, to integrate literacy effectively across the curriculum in meaningful and purposeful contexts. The literacy co-ordinators and learning support team have put in place a number of initiatives to ensure a more coherent and consistent approach to the acquisition and development of the children's literacy skills across the curriculum. The staff have worked well to implement the changed approaches and the children report positively on their enjoyment of the widened range of approaches and the new learning materials they are using in their spelling, reading and writing.
- During the inspection, the teachers made good use of practical resources to develop the children's mathematical thinking; however, in a majority of lessons, opportunities were missed to support the less able children and extend the challenge for the more able children. To improve the provision, the numeracy co-ordinator has appropriately identified the need to enable the children to develop a more independent, risk-taking and reflective approach to their learning in mathematics.
- There are effective arrangements in place to provide for the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning. Particular strengths in the provision include: the early identification of need in the nursery unit and foundation stage; the thorough monitoring and evaluation of progress made for those children receiving withdrawal support; and, the emphasis placed on parental involvement in the individual learning programmes. Individual education plans outline well-prioritised, measurable targets and include parent-led targets and guidance for the summer vacation period, to enhance continuity of support. The children are supported skilfully in withdrawal groups by very effective practitioners, including a team of classroom assistants trained to deliver withdrawal support in mathematics.
- The quality of the provision in the nursery unit is outstanding. The attractive, stimulating and caring learning environment provided in the nursery unit promotes effectively the children's language development, creativity, decision-making and self-management skills. The teacher in charge, well supported by the staff, has developed a rigorous process of observing and assessing the children's progress which informs very effectively the detailed short term planning. The quality of the staff interactions with the children are always very good or better; they listen well to the children and respond effectively to their interests and learning needs. A particular strength of the nursery unit is the quality of the self-evaluation processes which have led to significant improvements in the provision for learning.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is very good. The pastoral provision in the school is characterised by a caring, inclusive ethos which develops the children's sense of fairness and respect for others. There is an appropriate focus on promoting positive behaviour and the teachers use a range of reward systems which encourage the children well in their work and in their behaviour, which is exemplary. The children demonstrate maturity in taking on a variety of roles and responsibilities through, for example, their roles as playground helpers and in the school council.

- The school and nursery unit give very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity thereby encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The senior leadership team is highly committed to the pastoral and academic needs of all the children. Over the past year, the principal and vice-principal have managed successfully a significant change in staffing and have provided effective leadership to develop successfully a culture and ethos of collegiality throughout the school. This change in staffing has resulted in both the reorganisation and appointment of new co-ordinators in the key pastoral and curricular areas. It will be important that all of the co-ordinators' roles and responsibilities are developed further to enable them to monitor and evaluate more rigorously the quality of the children's learning experiences and attainments.
- The school development planning process is thorough and is underpinned by wide consultation with staff, governors, parents and pupils. There is a comprehensive school development plan in place which identifies key priorities for school improvement. The associated action plans need to be more focused on the learning needs of the children in order to guide better the process of monitoring and evaluation leading to improvement.
- The school and nursery unit have very effective links with the parents and the local community. A significant number of children in the school take part in a range of activities beyond the classroom which develops well, for example, their sporting and musical skills, and builds their self-esteem. The parents' contribution to school life, through the active parent teacher association, provides significant financial and community support to enrich and extend the children's learning opportunities. Throughout the school year, there are effective arrangements in place for communicating and consulting with parents to involve them in their children's education and the progress they are making in their learning.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the parents, staff and school community can have confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are well informed about the life and work of the school; they are actively involved in the school development planning process, finance and the curriculum. It will be important that the governors exercise further their challenge function in relation to the quality of the learning and teaching throughout the school.
- 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 year 7 children, they report that they feel safe and secure in school and know who to go to if they have concerns about their safety or well-being. The children spoke with enthusiasm and confidence about their experiences in school.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is good and the nursery unit is outstanding. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address.

The area for improvement is the need to:

- ensure consistency of best practice in learning and teaching across the school in order to raise further the standards for all children.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor, through district inspection activity, the school's progress on the area for improvement.

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