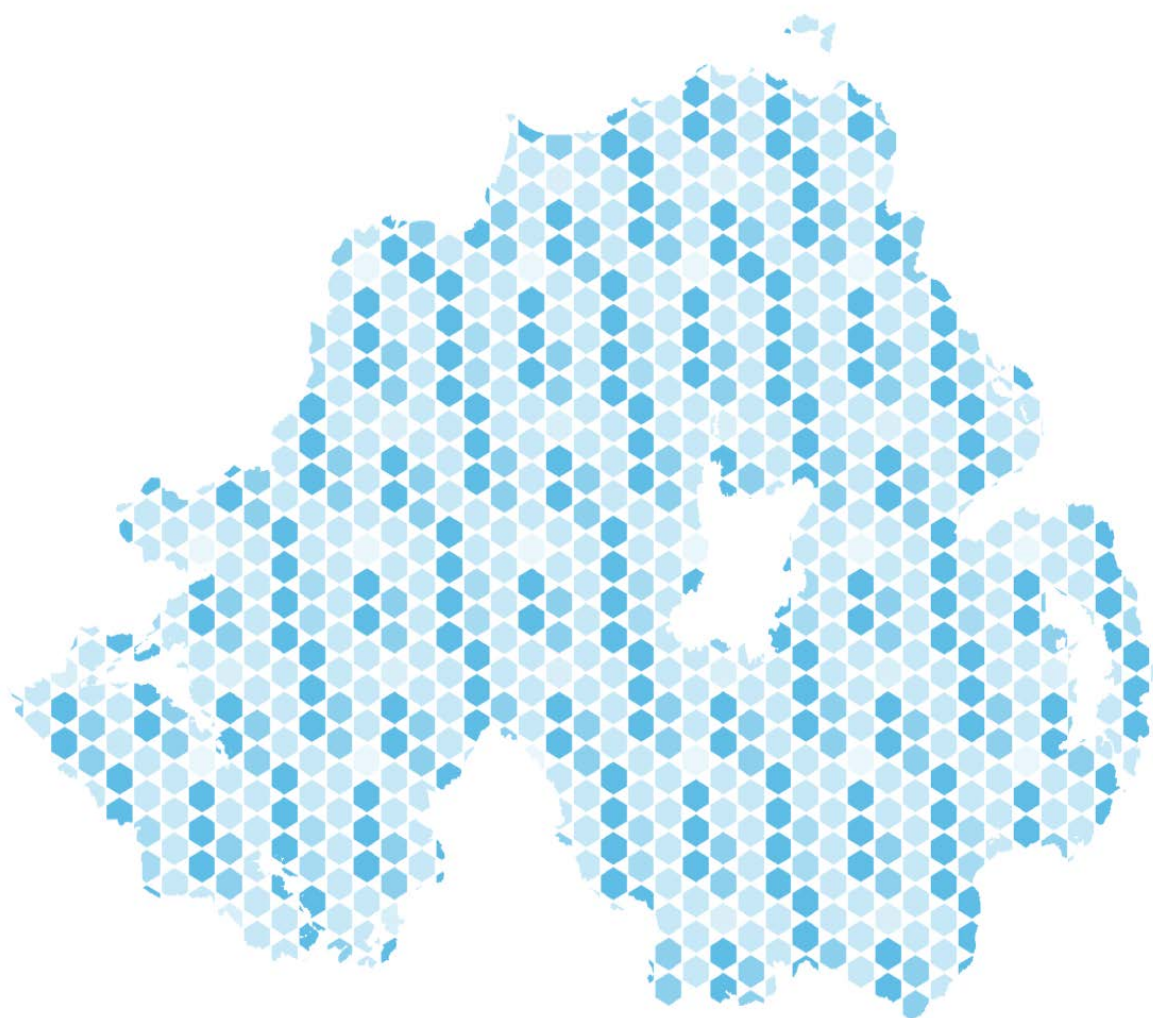


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Hollybush Primary School and
Nursery Unit, Culmore, Derry

Report of an Inspection in
November 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

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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.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	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	116	33	28	16
Teaching staff	17	14	88	*
Support staff	9	5	55	*

* fewer than 5

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 parental questionnaires may be low.

The majority of the responses to the parental questionnaires indicated very high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted their appreciation of the dedicated staff and the approachable and supportive leadership of the principal. The issues raised by a number of parents were discussed with the principal and governors. Most of the teachers and the support staff completed questionnaires and their responses were very positive.

2. Context

Hollybush Primary School and Nursery Unit is situated in the Culmore area of the City of Derry. Almost all of the children attending the school come from Culmore and the surrounding area. The enrolment has fluctuated over the last four years; it currently stands at 369 in the primary school and 52 children in the nursery unit. At the time of the inspection, approximately 16% of the children were entitled to free school meals (FSM) and approximately 9% of the children had been identified by the school as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

Hollybush Primary School and Nursery Unit	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Enrolment	431	434	435	421
% Attendance	94.5	95.4	95.4	97.3
FSME Percentage ¹	10.2	12.8	14.8	16.3
% of children on SEN register	12.9	12.3	9.1	10.0
No. of children with statements of educational needs	*	*	*	*
No. of newcomers	*	*	*	*

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	Outstanding
Leadership and Management	Outstanding
Nursery Unit	Outstanding

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standard

- The children are well-motivated learners; they display high levels of independence and maturity and their behaviour is exemplary. They respond very positively to the learning opportunities provided by their teachers and they have excellent personal and social skills. The children work collaboratively in pairs and groups; they are able to make decisions, think creatively and manage their own learning.

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

- An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 performance data, in three* of the past four years, shows that in English and mathematics, the school's performance is consistently above the Northern Ireland (NI) average. Compared with schools in the same free school meals (FSM) category, the levels of attainment are also consistently above the average in the three years. The school's internal performance data shows that by the end of key stage (KS) 2, almost all of the children, including the children who require additional support with their learning, make outstanding progress in English and mathematics and achieve in line with their ability, or above expectation.
- The standards achieved in literacy by almost all of the children are outstanding. The children's talking and listening skills are well developed and they display high levels of confidence when expressing their ideas and opinions. Throughout the school, the children read fluently, with expression and display consistent levels of interest in reading for enjoyment. The quality and accuracy of the children's written work is excellent, showing progress across the three key stages.
- Throughout the school, the children show a high level of engagement and enthusiasm during practical mathematical activities. Almost all of the children have a high level of understanding of number operations, place value and key concepts across the areas of mathematics. By the end of year 7, the most able children are competent and confident in applying their mathematical knowledge. They complete simple and more complex mental calculations quickly and accurately, explain clearly their methods and offer alternatives, and display high levels of flexibility in their mathematical thinking.
- The children in the nursery unit are very well behaved and settle quickly to play. Throughout the sessions, their levels of concentration are consistently very good. A majority of the children are aware of print and a few are attempting to form letters to represent their names; most are aware of early mathematical concepts. Their early representational drawing and artwork is of a high standard.
- The children use information and communication technology (ICT) confidently and appropriately. Their standards in information and communication technology (ICT), including the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) ICT Accreditation, are consistently above the Northern Ireland (NI) average.

6. Provision for learning

- The teachers' planning is comprehensive and rigorous; it is well informed by thorough evaluation of the children's previous learning and the teachers' knowledge of their individual needs. The quality of the teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding; most was good or better. In the best practice, learning and teaching is well planned, meets effectively the range of individual needs within the classroom and has good pace, challenge and progression. The teachers make skilful use of questioning to develop the children's thinking and oral responses. They use an effective range of assessment strategies to provide useful feedback to the children that enables them to improve the quality of their work.

* 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 school has developed a rigorous and coherent approach to the development of literacy skills that ensures all aspects of literacy are taught in a connected way, using an appropriate range of strategies. The teachers use very well a blend of interactive approaches, including role-play strategies, both to stimulate the children's interest and to broaden their thinking and vocabulary. Play-based learning provides valuable opportunities to develop the children's early literacy skills.
- The comprehensive whole school programme guides clearly the teachers' planning and ensures the children experience breadth, continuity and progression in their learning across the aspects of mathematics. The teachers set a high level of challenge in the numeracy sessions by including the development of the children's mental mathematical strategies and the use of very good practical activities to extend the children's thinking and use of mathematical language. The children who require additional support with their learning are identified early through classroom observation and the analysis of appropriate performance data. They benefit from a well-planned, collaborative programme which is consistently of a high standard and sensitive to the individual needs of the children. The children's learning is monitored and evaluated regularly ensuring progression. The classroom assistants make a very good contribution to the children's learning.
- The nursery unit staff plan and provide an interesting and progressively challenging pre-school programme that meets effectively the needs of all of the children. They use effectively the stimulating environment, both indoors and outdoors, to develop the children's learning. The staff are caring and supportive in their approach and the quality of their interaction with the children is consistently of a high standard.
- The quality of the provision for pastoral care is outstanding. The school's mission statement, *"To develop in our pupils a love of learning, a respect for all and a desire to realise their full potential,"* is evident throughout the life and work of the school. The school creates a positive learning environment, the children feel valued, they work very well together and they respect the views and opinions of others. The award winning Eco Committee and the active student council give the children a voice in important aspects of their learning. Throughout the school, there are outstanding working relationships at all levels.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, through a range of extra-curricular sporting activities and programmes to encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership of the school has a clear vision which focuses appropriately on improving learning and teaching, raising standards and the pastoral development of the whole-school community. The principal, who has been in post for seven years, leads effectively by example and inspires confidence and respect among the staff, children, governors and the wider school community. She has established a collaborative approach to decision making through the development of an effective senior leadership team. The co-ordinators provide very good curricular leadership; they monitor and evaluate the quality of work and provide appropriate guidance to their colleagues.

- The teacher-in-charge of the nursery unit has developed an effective self-evaluative approach to the review of the provision. There are very good links between the nursery unit and the primary school which support well the transition from pre-school to primary school.
- The school has a very well developed culture of self-evaluation. There is a comprehensive school development plan (SDP) which is informed by the school's monitoring and evaluation processes, including an efficient use of performance data and the teachers' observation of the quality of learning and teaching. A particular strength of the school development plan (SDP) is the consideration given to the views of all stakeholders.
- The school has effective links with the parents who are well informed about their children's progress and the life and work of the school through, for example, monthly newsletters, a texting service and curriculum evenings. To enhance further the learning opportunities for the children, the school has established very good links with a range of other schools, with people in the community and with various external agencies.
- 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 are very well informed about the school and carry out effectively their support and challenge functions.
- 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 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.

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