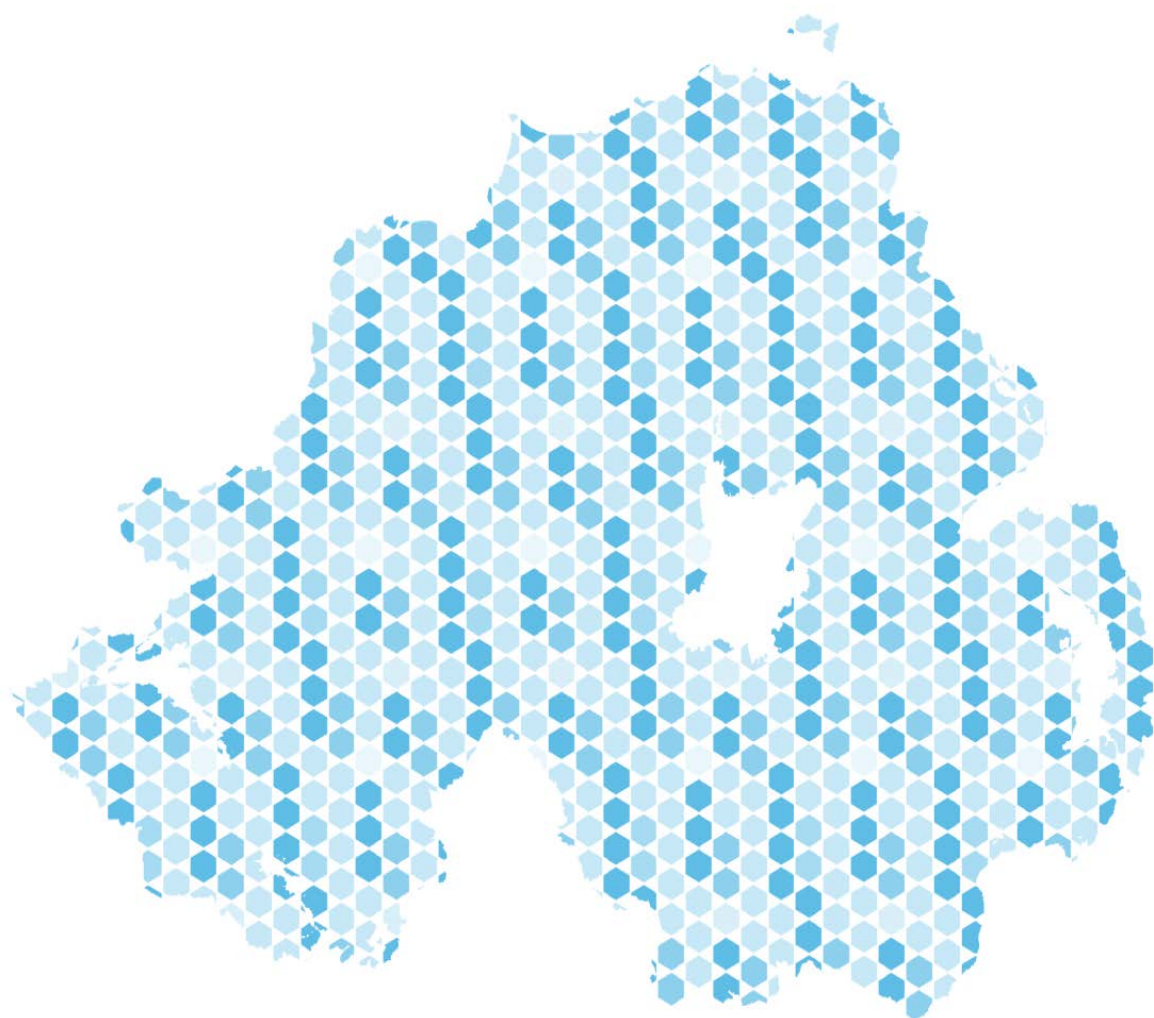


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Holy Trinity Primary School  
and Nursery Unit, Cookstown,  
Co Tyrone

Report of an Inspection in  
May 2014



Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education  
Department for Employment and Learning  
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



## 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	420	84	20%	24
Teaching staff	29	17	66%	*
Teaching support staff	17	15	88%	*
Support staff	*	*	*	*

\* 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 parent/carer questionnaires may be low.

The responses to the parental questionnaires indicated very high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. They praised the caring principal and the professional staff for their work and indicated that the primary school and nursery unit had a good reputation in the community. They appreciated, in particular, the parent information programmes, extended school activities and the well-organised and friendly school. A few matters were raised about the primary school and these were shared with the principal and representatives of the board of governors; they are addressed in the body of the report.

The teachers, teaching support staff and the support staff completed questionnaires and their responses were very positive; they emphasised the high expectations and care for the children, the very good working relationships across the school and the valuable links with the parents and the wider community.

## 2. Context

Holy Trinity Primary School and Nursery Unit is situated in the centre of Cookstown and caters for the children of the parish of Cookstown, County Tyrone. Most of the children attending the school come from the immediate area and a small number travel to the school from the wider surrounding area. The enrolment has been stable over the last four years and currently stands at 556 children in the primary school and 52 children in the nursery unit.

The full-time nursery unit is over-subscribed. At the time of the inspection, 47% of the children in the school were entitled to free school meals and 18% of the children had been identified by the school as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

Holy Trinity Primary School and Nursery Unit	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Enrolment	591	570	558	556
Nursery Unit	53	52	52	52
Special Unit	15	14	0	7
% Attendance	93.9	94.7	94.9	95.4
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	29.4	32.6	40.2	43.0
% of children on SEN register	18.8	21.5	18.9	17.6
No. of children with statements of educational needs	18	20	15	12
No. of newcomers	93	97	115	135

**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

<b>Overall Performance Level</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Achievements and Standards</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Provision</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Leadership and Management</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Nursery Unit</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Learning Support Centre</b>	<b>Good</b>

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

## Key findings of the inspection

### 5. Achievements and standards

- The children are independent, courteous, confident and well-motivated learners. Their well-developed thinking skills and personal capabilities enable them to make choices and decisions, to express and justify their opinions and to respect the views of others. The children have a particular interest in science and the arts which is effectively broadening their learning and skills. They have positive attitudes and dispositions to collaborative learning and apply their skills and knowledge to real life contexts which are set within their cross-curricular lessons.
- An analysis of the end of key stage (KS) 2 performance data over three years<sup>2</sup> shows that in English and mathematics the school's performance was generally in line with or above the Northern Ireland (NI) average and that of schools in the same free school meals (FSM) category. The school's internal performance data shows that almost all of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make significant progress in English and mathematics and achieve in line with their ability, or above expectation.
- In mathematics, across all stages, the children show a high level of enjoyment and engagement in their mathematical activities and they use mathematical language with a high level of understanding and competence. By year 7, the most able children are very secure in their understanding of number and place value, drawing on a wide range of strategies to complete accurately mental calculations. In English, almost all of the children read with a high degree of comprehension and write at or above their expected levels; a significant minority of the children are achieving well above expected levels. In addition, the children use an extensive vocabulary; from an early age they are confident to perform for a large audience and, as they progress to year 7, they can draw upon a breadth of written styles and media to communicate their ideas, findings and proposals.
- The newcomer children and those identified with additional needs achieve very well and are able to overcome barriers to their language development and learning. Almost all of the children demonstrate very good progress in literacy and numeracy and achieve a range of skills that enables them to participate fully in all school activities.
- The children in the nursery unit are generally well behaved and spend lengthy periods engaging in sustained and productive play. They produce representational drawing and model making of a very high standard and show very good levels of confidence and independence in their work and play. The children co-operate well with the staff during set routines and activities, can listen attentively to stories and follow simple instructions. A majority of the children demonstrate good pre-writing skills and early number recognition.

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<sup>2</sup> 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 2011/12 data was incomplete due to industrial action.

- The children's use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance their learning is a key strength of the school. By year 7, they apply editing and creative techniques to express their learning across the curriculum. The children's achievements in the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) information and communication technology (ICT) Accreditation are consistently in line with the Northern Ireland (NI) average.

## **6. Provision**

- The quality of the planning, teaching and assessment is consistent across the primary school and contributes effectively to the children's high levels of achievement. The nursery unit and the learning support unit have appropriately identified the need to develop further the planning and assessment arrangements to ensure consistency and the sharing of best practice. The quality of the learning and teaching in most of the lessons observed was good or better and, in over half of the lessons, was very good or outstanding. The teachers have high expectations for achievement and plan together in year groups to identify carefully the learning to be developed in order to meet the children's individual needs. They use open-ended questioning techniques and a range of strategies to develop the children's thinking, for example, peer and self assessment. The teaching ensures differentiation, pace, challenge and progression and is well-informed by a thorough evaluation of the children's previous learning and the teachers' knowledge of their specific needs.
- The school has developed a coherent and connected framework for the development of literacy and numeracy skills. The transitions from the nursery and through the three stages in the primary school are incremental and there is a clear progression in the children's learning of key literacy and numeracy concepts and skills. A key feature of the numeracy provision is the focus on problem solving investigations, linked to real life contexts and themes, which extends the children's thinking and develops their mathematical language. The staff have an effective collegial approach to the integration of literacy skills within and across the curriculum. The introduction of an accelerated reading programme has contributed to a great interest in reading, particularly by the boys. The children report that they enjoy the books in the school library and also use the town library to read for pleasure.
- The nursery unit is presented to a high standard and is enhanced by attractive and interesting displays incorporating much of the children's art work. The staff plan a broad programme that provides variety for the children throughout the year. A range of different methods is used to gather information about the children's responses to the planned activities. The staff need to refine this practice to ensure consistency of approach and to build up a more accurate account of the children's progress and development across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The quality of the interaction between the staff and the children is sensitive, supportive and consistently of a high standard.
- There is a highly effective whole-school approach to supporting children with statements of special educational needs with an appropriate emphasis on early identification by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and class teachers. Very good links have been established with the parents; they are kept well informed about their child's progress and how they can support their child's learning. The teachers know the children well and have in place highly effective

focused individual education plans and strategies to guide their teaching. They maintain careful records of progress and work diligently to ensure the children progress and their needs are met. The classroom assistants work effectively with the teachers and provide very good individual support for the children in class. The children who receive withdrawal and in-class support for literacy and numeracy benefit well from the imaginative and appropriately paced lessons provided by the support teachers.

- The children in the learning support centre benefit from the caring and supportive environment that encourages them to respond positively to the range of learning experiences designed to develop their academic and social needs. The recently appointed learning support teacher works effectively with the assistants to support the children who have a range of complex and challenging needs. There are very good opportunities for the children to integrate and work with their peers in classes throughout the school and they are included in all aspects of school life. The principal and SENCO are effective in monitoring and supporting the work of the learning support centre and in providing further opportunities for the continued professional development of the staff.
- The quality of the provision for pastoral care in the school, including the learning support centre and the nursery unit, is outstanding. The staff create a wholly inclusive and positive learning environment for all of the children; there are outstanding working relationships at all levels. The children feel valued and show respect for the views and opinions of others; they are encouraged to take responsibility and play an active role in the school through the Eco- and School Councils and the 'Playground Pals' initiative. The staff, give close attention to developing the children's self-esteem and nurturing their social and emotional health and well-being.
- The school gives outstanding attention to adopting a healthy lifestyle through encouraging healthy eating and providing a wide range of sporting and other after school programmes.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The principal has a clear strategic vision for innovative school improvement and sets high expectations for all to achieve within a calm, caring and inclusive learning environment. Action for improvement is continuous and the whole staff work effectively as a productive team. The leadership and management of the school is wholly focused on meeting the academic, spiritual, personal, social and emotional needs of the children.
- The vice-principal, co-ordinators and curriculum teams are highly motivated and work collaboratively to improve learning and teaching and the standards and achievements for all children. The further development of the monitoring and evaluation of the nursery unit and the learning support centre is appropriately identified as an ongoing priority area of development.
- The staff have established a culture of self-evaluation and they are focused on addressing low and underachievement which is informed by a rigorous monitoring role and supportive partnership between the staff and the board of governors. 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. These functions, conducted through well-informed, strategic governance, enable the school to maintain the high standards which are leading clearly to improvement in the children's standards in literacy and numeracy. There is a comprehensive school development plan which has been informed by consultation and self-evaluation.

- A key strength of the school is the extensive range of purposeful and mutually beneficial partnerships which enhance and enrich further the quality and range of the children's learning opportunities. The innovative 'Family and Friends of Holy Trinity,' provides an important forum for parents and guardians to support the school in achieving the priorities agreed in the school development plan. There are highly effective procedures in place to keep parents well informed about their children's progress. Effective links have been established with parents through curricular workshops, regular newsletters and the informative school website. The staff maintain effective links with the local pre-schools, post-primary schools, cluster groups and a variety of external support agencies to ensure that the children are well supported, and facilitated to engage in shared education activities.
- 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 felt very secure in school and knew what to do if they had 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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