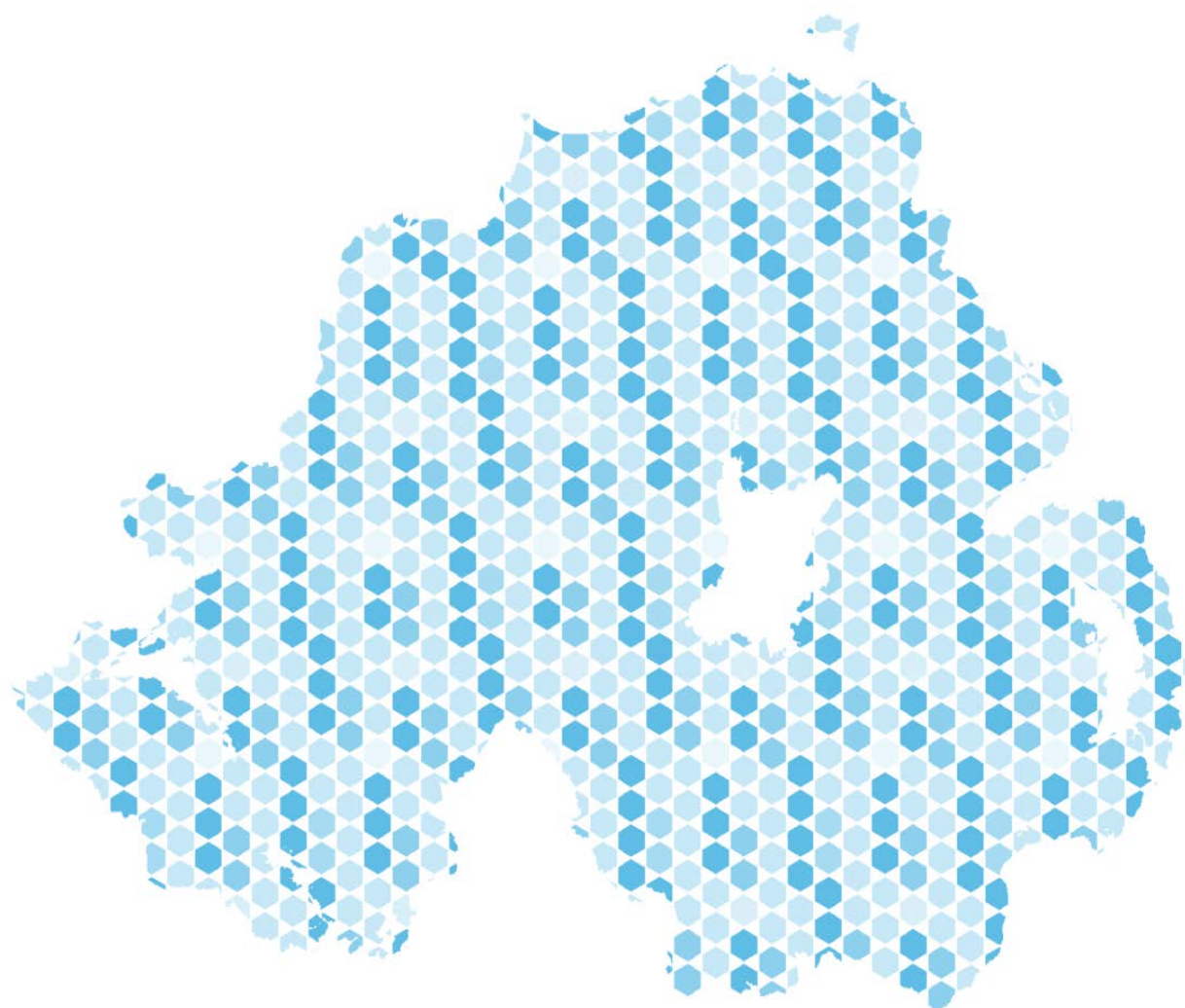


PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training
Inspectorate

John Paul II Primary School,
Belfast

Report of an Inspection in
March 2015

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, and the children's written work. They held formal and informal discussions with children, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- meetings 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.

Fifteen percent of the parents responded to the questionnaires; their responses were highly affirmative, indicating very good support for the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents acknowledged the caring and supportive learning environment, the wide range of after-school activities, the dedicated principal and hard-working staff, and the sense of community within the school. Eighty-seven percent of the teaching staff and 42% of the support staff completed questionnaires and the responses were very positive about nearly all aspects of the work of the school. In particular they highlighted the welcoming ethos for all members of the school community, the effective communication among the staff, and their enjoyment of working in the school. The ETI has reported the responses to the principal and the governors, and has discussed with them the few minor issues arising from the questionnaires.

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 provision for literacy and numeracy in the school; and
3. the quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

John Paul II Primary School is situated on the Whiterock Road in West Belfast. The school is an amalgamation of St Aidan's Boys' and St Bernadette's Girls' Primary Schools and was established as John Paul II on 31 August 2013. All of the children who attend the school come from the local area. Eighty-eight per cent of the children are entitled to free school meals and 39% of the children, require additional help with aspects of their learning. In addition, to the mainstream classes, year 1 to year 7, the school provides a nurture - "sunshine" room, for a small number of key stage (KS) 1 children, unable to engage fully in their classes. The area which the school serves experiences very significant levels of unemployment and social deprivation.

John Paul ii Primary School	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	261	258
% Attendance (NI Average)	93.2 (94)	94
FSME Percentage ¹	88	88
% (No) of children on SEN register	43 (112)	39 (101)
No. of children with statements of educational needs	9	15
No. of newcomers	0	0

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

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are very welcoming, well motivated and their behaviour is very good. They engage enthusiastically with the learning process and, when given the opportunity, communicate well their ideas and opinions. The children are very willing to help others, take pride in their achievements, present their work to a good standard and engage very well with visitors to the school. The work of the choir observed during the inspection was outstanding.
- The school's internal assessment data shows that most of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make good progress in English and mathematics, in line with their ability or above expectation.
- Throughout the school, most of the children talk confidently about their learning and are encouraged, from the earliest stage, to share their views and opinions. They read fluently, with good levels of accuracy and understanding. The most able year 7 children enjoy reading and are familiar with a wide range of authors. Across the key stages the children write to a good standard in different forms and for a variety of purposes. In a minority of instances there are inconsistencies in the standards expected in handwriting, presentation, and in the level of challenge for the most able children.

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

- Across the school the children complete calculations with good levels of accuracy and show developing flexibility in applying mental mathematics strategies to solve problems and complete investigations. By year 7, the most able children demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of key concepts across the mathematics curriculum. To raise further 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.
- From an early stage, the children use information and communication technology (ICT) confidently and appropriately to support their learning. Most of the children attain good standards in ICT and use it to enhance and develop their skills and capabilities.

6. Provision

- Most of the teaching observed was effective in promoting learning. In the best practice the teachers use assessment for learning strategies effectively in their teaching to build on the children's prior learning and connect it well to other areas of the curriculum. They make skilful use of open-ended questions to develop further the children's understanding and effective use is made of the plenary sessions to review and consolidate learning. In order to improve further the good quality of learning, the teachers need to give the children greater responsibility for their own learning and provide further opportunities to challenge the more able children.
- The teachers' short-term planning is effective and informs well the day-to-day learning and teaching. The children's work is marked regularly and the teacher's written comments provide clear guidance on what needs to be improved and how to improve it. The school has identified appropriately the need to review and develop medium and long-term planning with a focus on progression across all areas of the curriculum.
- A key strength of the school is the high quality provision for children in the foundation stage. The very effective links with local nursery schools and their joint approach to planning for play-based learning ensures excellent continuity and progression in the children's learning.
- The school's recently reviewed programme for literacy ensures progression across the key stages in talking and listening, reading and writing. In most classes, the teachers encourage the children to give extended answers and develop their language through effective questioning, paired, group and whole-class discussion. There are notable strengths in the literacy provision in the foundation stage; nearly all of the children are developing well their phonological awareness and early writing skills through a variety of well planned and innovative activities. The staff develop an enjoyment of reading amongst the children and they have regular opportunities to read for research, personal interest and pleasure. The children are encouraged to read beyond the classroom, they make good use the well-stocked school library and visits to the local library extend further their opportunities for reading. To improve the provision further, the school has identified appropriately the need to develop a whole-school approach to the teaching of reading.

- In mathematics, the children access a wide range of activities with an increasing emphasis on problem-solving and investigation. Well-planned tasks, delivered through suitable play-based learning, develop the younger children's mathematical knowledge and understanding. Overall, the teachers are making good use of practical resources to develop the children's mathematical thinking and language and to consolidate and extend their knowledge. Across the key stages, the children show a high level of enjoyment and engagement in their mathematical activities and are developing a positive attitude to this area of learning. To improve the provision, the school leadership team has identified the need for the children to develop further their independence, reflect upon their learning in mathematics and suggest ways in which they can improve the process of their investigations and the quality of their work.
- The children who require additional support with their learning benefit from early identification and intervention. The classroom assistants support effectively the children and assist their learning and development in the classes. There is good liaison with parents and effective partnership arrangements with external agencies to help the staff, the children and their families in addressing barriers to the children's learning. The effectiveness of the individual education plans varies: in the most effective practice, the targets are focused well on the individual needs of each child, with appropriate associated strategies and measurable intended outcomes. It will be important for the staff to review the individual education plans to ensure greater consistency across the school.
- The teacher and classroom assistant in the recently established nurture room address very effectively the children's particular difficulties through a calm and highly supportive environment. The children settle well, make good progress in their learning, gain self-confidence and begin to develop good social skills. The children's progress is monitored thoroughly and informs well future planning.
- The quality of the provision for pastoral care in the school is outstanding. The philosophy of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust charter pervades the life and work of the school and is exemplified in the daily practice which fosters and values the children's qualities and strengths. Through a number of forums including the school council, the views of the children are sought, valued and used to inform developments in the school's provision. A strong sense of community and mutual respect between the staff and the children is evident in the school; all of the staff are highly committed to the care and well being of the children.
- The school has excellent links and partnerships with the wider community including community workers, and a variety of external support agencies as well as international links through the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. The children's learning experiences are extended and enriched as a result of the opportunities to take part in a wide range of activities and events beyond the classroom. In addition, the close co-operation with the Full Service Community Network has enabled the school to provide enhanced support for parents and carers to help them to build their capacity to affect educational outcomes for themselves and their children.
- The school gives very good attention to healthy eating and physical activity through the promotion of healthy breaks and provides regular opportunities for the children to engage in energetic physical activity, which encourage them to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership team and staff have a shared strategic vision for providing high quality education which values every child. The principal, well supported by the vice-principal, provides highly effective and inspirational leadership. The leadership team, co-ordinators and staff work diligently and with increasing collegiality to bring about improvement in key aspects of the school's overall provision, and place an appropriate focus on improving the children's learning experiences and the standards they attain. The co-ordinators are highly committed, lead well their respective areas of responsibility and provide skilled support for the staff. The school has identified appropriately the need to develop further the role of the curriculum co-ordinators and the capacity of the staff to monitor and evaluate more effectively the quality and consistency of provision across all areas of the curriculum.
- The school improvement process is clearly linked to a comprehensive school development plan (SDP) that has involved extensive consultation with the staff, children, parents and governors and indicates appropriate areas for development. In taking this good work forward, and in light of the inspection findings, it will be important that, the leadership team review and prioritise further the number of key actions identified in the school development plan to bring about continued school improvement.
- The governors carry out their roles conscientiously and supportively and understand well the challenges and opportunities facing the school. Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, ETI's evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. In order to develop further their knowledge of the curriculum developments and the standards the children attain the governors intend to enhance communication with the key post holders in 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 inspectors, the year 6 children reported that they felt secure in school and know what to do if they had any concerns about their well-being.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is good. 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 which includes the need:

- to embed the developing culture of self-evaluation, to improve the consistency of the children's learning experiences and raise the standards they attain.

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

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