

PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Round Tower Integrated
Primary School, Antrim

Report of an Inspection in
January 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.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 a representative from the governors;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Twelve per cent of parents and seventy per cent of staff (teaching and non-teaching) responded to the questionnaires. The responses to the parental questionnaires indicated that most of the parents have high levels of satisfaction with almost all areas of the life and work of the school. In particular, they highlighted the friendly, dedicated and approachable staff and the extensive range of after-school activities. The staff responses were very positive; they commented favourably on the strong focus of developing leadership roles and raising standards within the school. The ETI has reported the main issues emerging from the questionnaires to the principal and a representative 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 provision in the school; and
3. the quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

Round Tower Integrated Primary School is situated on the north-side of the town of Antrim. The enrolment of the school has remained fairly steady over the past four years and the school has been regularly over-subscribed. The children who attend the school travel from the Springfarm Estate, the town of Antrim and the surrounding country areas. Approximately 30% of the children are entitled to free school meals. The school has identified 33% of the children as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning. At the time of the inspection, the school was undergoing refurbishment work.

Round Tower Integrated Primary School	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	273	280	269	280
% Attendance (NI Average)	94.6	95.1	95	96.8
FSME Percentage ¹	23	26	29	30
% (No) of children on SEN register	29	34	33	33
No. of children with statements of educational needs	5	5	*	5
No. of newcomers	27	26	36	37

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

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 well motivated and engage enthusiastically in their learning. They work well in pairs and small groups and, when given the opportunity, they display high levels of independence and self-management. The children are respectful of the adults and to each other and are confident in seeking help when required. They are willing to have a go and use mistakes as a learning opportunity, demonstrating a growing resilience.
- The school's performance data shows that the majority 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. The staff have identified a minority of the children in literacy, and, a significant minority in numeracy who are potentially underachieving; these numbers have been reducing due to the focus on raising standards.
- The children's talking and listening skills are well developed and they are confident in sharing their ideas with others, particularly in well-managed classroom discussions and through effective peer-editing activities in key stage (KS) 2. By year 7, the more able children read a variety of genres with fluency, understanding and evident enjoyment. The children develop a good knowledge and understanding of a range of writing forms and, in the effective practice in key stage (KS) 2, they plan, draft and edit their written work. By year 7, the more able children apply skilfully a range of mathematical strategies and can self-correct when necessary. They demonstrate flexibility in problem-solving tasks, use mathematical language precisely and can apply their mathematical understanding in real and relevant contexts.

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

- The majority of the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are overcoming with a good measure of success their specific barriers to progress in their education.
- The children achieve good standards in information and communication technology (ICT) as evidenced by their confident use of computers, interactive white boards and iPads and their use of a wide range of software, including numeracy and literacy games, word processing and internet research.

6. Provision

- There is a consistent format for medium-term planning within the school and the teachers plan differentiated learning activities for the children within their classes. All teachers evaluate their planning regularly and, in the best practice, they reflect carefully on the children's learning and use these evaluations to inform future plans. There is a need to ensure that all teachers make more effective use of their evaluations as some of the planned activities, for groups and individuals, do not match sufficiently the differing needs of the children in the class.
- The teachers mark the children's work regularly with positive comments and, in the best practice, they provide clear indication of how the children can improve the quality of their work. In addition, the children are given opportunities to evaluate their own work and that of their peers. The staff have identified the need to disseminate this best practice to help ensure more consistency across all classes.
- In the most effective lessons, the teachers use a range of active learning strategies to engage the children with their work. Skilful questioning promotes well the children's thinking, encourages them to provide extended answers and makes good use of all learning opportunities. There is an appropriate pace to the lessons and the use of a range of classroom management approaches ensures that there is a purposeful environment for learning. Good use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) as a tool for learning in all classes. In the less effective practice, the level of challenge in the activities did not match the needs and abilities of the children, particularly for the more able children. There is a need for the teachers to develop the planning and provision for play- and activity-based learning in the foundation stage (FS) and KS 1 respectively, to provide more appropriately challenging activities which develop learning across the curriculum.
- The staff provide learning support for the children identified with additional learning needs through withdrawal sessions and in-class support. The withdrawal sessions provide very effective support in helping children to overcome their barriers to learning and are a key strength in the special educational needs provision. There is a need for the leadership team to review the deployment and planning for in-class support, to ensure that this is impacting effectively on the children's learning. There is variation in how specific and measurable the targets for development are in the individual education plans across the year groups. The current individual education plan format does not include important information on each child's specific needs and strengths.

- The literacy scheme provides appropriate guidance for the teaching of English; in particular, the teachers make good use of the four-weekly plans to ensure that guided reading is well prepared. The literacy intervention programmes, such as, the 'Reading Partnership' programme and an accelerated reading programme, and an additional full-time teacher through the 'Signature'² programme have made a positive impact on the children's reading attainment. The areas for further development for all teachers relate to the provision for the children of a wider variety of challenging follow-on reading activities and greater opportunities for extended writing across all areas of the curriculum.
- In the most effective practice in numeracy, the teachers promote the children's enjoyment and their mathematical thinking through open-ended problem solving activities. Mathematics intervention strategies, such as the booster sessions delivered in the 'Mathemagic Programme', have a positive effect on raising both the children's attainment and their confidence in mathematics. The staff have identified appropriately the need to raise further the standards achieved by all of the children in numeracy. The mathematics scheme provides a good breadth across all areas of the mathematics curriculum. The teachers need to review the timing of the teaching of place value concepts in order to build sequentially the children's learning in measures.
- The very good pastoral care within the school is characterised by a caring and inclusive ethos. The children are polite and very well behaved; they respond well to the range of positive behaviour strategies within the school. There are very good opportunities for the children to take on roles and responsibilities as 'Anti-bullying Ambassadors', members of the school- and Eco-councils and through the peer mediation strategy. In discussion, a group of children from year 6 spoke very positively about the care and support they receive from their teachers and the wide range of after-school activities that they enjoy.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, thereby encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The principal has led a review of the strategic leadership within the school. A clearly defined leadership structure is in place which provides successful distributed leadership among the staff. The co-ordinators are effective in leading and managing their areas of responsibility; they articulate a clear strategic direction that focuses on improving the children's attainment and learning experiences among all staff at key stage and curricular team level.
- The school development planning processes are of a good quality and are informed by views of the school community and a developing use of the school's performance data. The school leadership has identified appropriately the need to develop further both the effective use of the data and the monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure continued improvements in the standards and provision.

² The Improving Literacy and Numeracy Signature Programme is funded by the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister and aims to raise the literacy and numeracy levels of children and young people in Primary and Post-Primary Schools

- The school is well-connected to the local community and has developed valuable links with both the local pre-school settings and the post-primary schools. The children have had opportunities to take part in inter-generational dance and music activities through links with a local nursing home and a day-care centre. The staff and governors are developing shared education with other schools from across the sectors through the shared education forum, 'Moving Forward Together'. There are good links with the parents in the school through two parent/teacher meetings each year and a curricular evening and range of workshops. The well-organised 'Incredible Years Project' provides valuable support for parents.
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors have identified the need to develop their leadership role within the school and to provide opportunities for the co-ordinators to engage with them directly through informing them on the progress made regarding improvements in learning and teaching.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The following areas need to be addressed:
 - a review of the arrangements for children to change for physical education or after-school activities and the development of a changing policy; and
 - the updating of a small number of policies to reflect more fully the practices in the school.

The children in year 6 spoke very positively about their experiences in school and they stated that they feel safe in school and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns regarding 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 areas for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address.

There is a need to:

- raise further the children's standards in literacy and numeracy; and
- improve further the quality of the learning and teaching to provide appropriate levels of challenge for all of the children.

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

Health and safety

1. The children's playground area is not enclosed. There is an urgent need for the employing authority and the board of governors to take the appropriate actions to secure the playground to reduce any health and safety risk to the children.

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