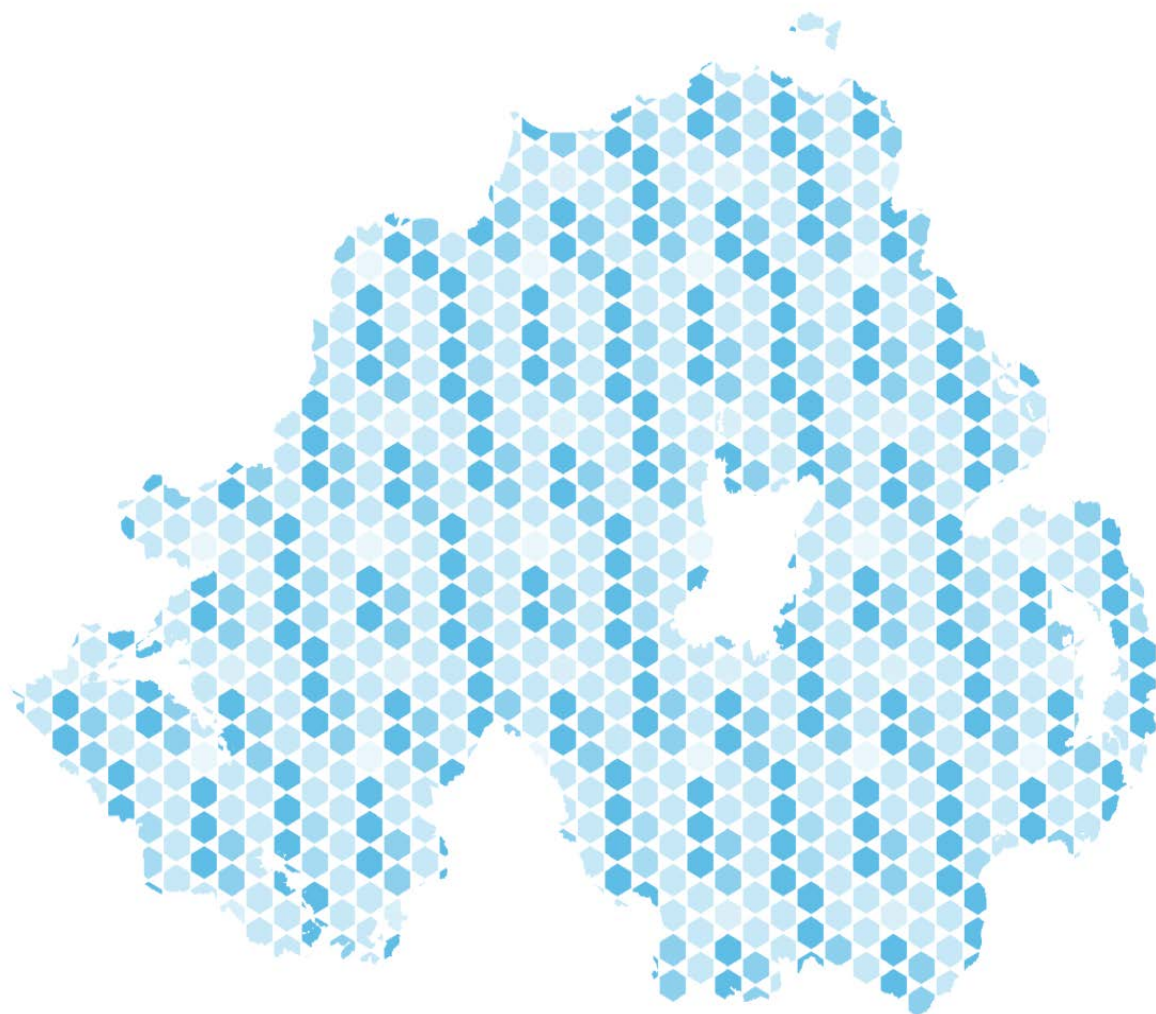


PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Brendan's Primary School
and Nursery Unit, Craigavon,
Co Armagh

Report of an Inspection in
January 2015



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(s) from the governors;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

The responses to the parental questionnaires indicated high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted how hard the teachers in the school and nursery unit work to support each child's learning, make them feel included and to encourage them to do their best. The issues raised were discussed with the principal and the chair of governors. Most of the teachers and support staff completed questionnaires and their responses were positive. In a discussion with the chair of governors, she emphasised their support for the school, the inclusive ethos, the quality of the provision for the children and the strong focus on establishing and maintaining links with each family.

2. 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 nursery unit; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

St Brendan's Primary School and Nursery Unit are situated in Craigavon, County Armagh. The children attending the school and the nursery unit come from the surrounding area. The enrolment currently stands at 468 children, 52 of whom are in the nursery unit. At the time of the inspection, approximately 41% of the children were entitled to free school meals and around 22% of the children had been identified by the school as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning. An acting principal was appointed in December 2013 and an acting vice-principal was appointed in April 2014. Almost all of the co-ordinators have taken up their roles within the last year.

St Brendan's Primary School	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	438	457	457	468
% Attendance	94	94	94	96
FSME Percentage ¹	35	40	42	41
% of children on SEN register	22	23	26	22
No. of children with statements of educational needs	16	16	12	11
No. of newcomers	53	70	61	68

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	Very Good

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are confident and enthusiastic learners. They enjoy engaging in discussions with their peers and taking part in challenging activities, in which they demonstrate very well their ability to think flexibly and complete investigations. The children's behaviour is exemplary; they respond very well to the positive ethos in all of the classrooms and, in particular, when the teachers have appropriately high expectations of their ability. The children would benefit from more opportunities to think about, reflect on and suggest ways in which they can improve the quality of their work.
- The school's performance data indicates that most of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make very good progress in English and mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation.
- The children in the nursery unit engage in purposeful play across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. They demonstrate high levels of independence in their decision-making and use of a wide range of resources to sustain their play. A small number of children are supported skilfully and sensitively by the staff to engage them more fully in play with their peers. The children make significant progress regarding their development of early scientific and technological skills and mathematical concepts through the imaginative range of play activities provided by the staff, in particular, the space theme. They develop an interest in early reading through the effective story-telling sessions and their exploration of fiction and non-fiction books.

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

- During the inspection, a group of the most able children from year 7 read fluently and discussed with enthusiasm their favourite authors and the texts they enjoy best, making connections between texts, their own experiences and the world around them. A key feature of the literacy provision is the appropriate focus on the development of the children's reading skills. The school's reading programme is systematic and rigorous; the teachers use effectively the well-planned guided reading sessions to develop the children's fluency, understanding and enjoyment of reading. There is an appropriate whole-school focus on developing further the comprehension skills of all the children and in particular, their inferential reading skills. There are good opportunities for the children to write in a variety of styles and for a range of purposes. Informed by pupil outcomes, there is a need to ensure appropriate progression in the quality of the writing being produced by the children as they move through the school.
- By year 7, the children demonstrate knowledge and use different mathematical strategies to solve problems. During discussions with the most able children, they displayed flexibility in their thinking and exhibited good understanding of key mathematical concepts. As they progress through the school, the children use mathematical language confidently and demonstrate flexibility in their thinking, using and applying their knowledge to increasingly complex everyday situations that relate to mathematics. By year 7, the most able children apply and adapt an extensive range of mental strategies to solve mathematical problems, secure in their knowledge and thinking in almost all areas of the curriculum.
- Almost all of the children receiving additional support sessions for literacy make very good progress in reading fluency, spelling and comprehension. They enjoy the withdrawal sessions and develop well their self confidence. There is robust evidence of children on the special needs register making good progress and becoming more independent in their learning.
- Across the school the children have opportunities to work with a range of information and communication technology (ICT) devices which supports their learning and develops their skills. They use ICT competently and enjoy working with the various devices and age-appropriate software.

6. Provision

- The planning for learning in the nursery and across the school is thorough and progresses well the children's learning. The teachers have a very detailed knowledge of the learning needs of the children in their classes; almost all have high expectations of, and for, all of the children and the planning and teaching reflect these well.
- The quality of almost all of the lessons observed was of a high standard. Key characteristics of this high-quality learning and teaching are; the choice of activities which engaged, enthused and enabled the children to apply their learning in meaningful contexts; the very effective use of plenary sessions, in which skilful questioning by the teachers was used to assess, consolidate and deepen the children's understanding. In the less effective practice, the activities set were not challenging enough, the lessons were overly directed by the teachers and as a result the pace was too slow.

- The teachers mark the children's work regularly and, in the best practice, provide meaningful guidance to the children on how to improve their work further and set appropriate individual targets. As the children move through the school, to ensure consistency, the teachers need to focus more sharply on helping the children to assess accurately their own work and to measure their progress against personal targets.
- Throughout the school, there is a literacy-rich, stimulating environment with attractive displays in corridors and classrooms to support learning and celebrate the children's efforts in writing. The teachers exploit well opportunities to make connections to other curriculum areas, including art, play-based learning and the world around us. In addition, they make effective use of a range of ICT resources to develop and extend the children's literacy skills. In the most effective practice, children have good opportunities to develop their talking and listening skills through meaningful class discussion and appropriate group and paired work. Opportunities for children to justify opinions and ideas, evaluate and make inferences and draw appropriate conclusions through well-planned talking and listening activities should be embedded consistently across the key stages.
- In the most effective practice in numeracy, the children develop their independence with appropriately challenging tasks which take account of the full range of ability; this effective practice should be embedded across the key stages. The children use mental mathematics activities during or prior to numeracy lessons to good effect and develop well their ability to explain solutions to the challenges set. The teachers use a wide range of summative assessments to plot the children's progress and review planning for lessons. The school has identified appropriately the need to review and consolidate further the process of assessment to build consistency in how the analysis of data is used to inform planning and support the children's progress in their learning.
- In the nursery unit, there are very good learning opportunities in all aspects of the pre-school curriculum; of significant note are the developments of the children's personal, social and emotional well-being and language skills. The children enjoy outstanding early scientific and technological learning experiences through topics that extend their knowledge of, and interest in, the world around them. The quality of the staff's interactions is consistently very good, with many examples of outstanding discussions with the children that extend their thinking skills. The organisation of the day is managed successfully to ensure that routines are well-established and they support the children's development of social responsibility for their learning environment. The staff make effective use of their observations to assess the children's progress; to identify individual children's needs and to plan for more challenge and progression in the children's learning.
- The provision for children with additional learning needs is good. The withdrawal support for literacy is highly effective and characterised by a wide range of helpful interventions and an in-depth knowledge of the children by the staff and classroom assistants. The responsibility for peripatetic support for literacy has been transferred to the school from the local education and library board, and although it is at an early stage of development, the children are engaging well and progress is evident. Overall, the children's progress is monitored systematically, with the outcomes evaluated effectively to inform future planning and provision.

- The pastoral care provision within the school and the nursery unit is very good and supports well the children in developing a sense of their own worth and a respect for others, including those of different nationalities and cultures. The children play a meaningful and valuable role in the life of the school; their views are sought and acted upon. By the end of Key Stage 2 they take on roles and responsibilities, for example, as prefects and house captains and within the student council, with increasing maturity and confidence.
- The school and nursery unit give outstanding attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, thereby encouraging the children to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The acting principal, acting vice-principal, and the recently formed senior leadership team, working effectively and in increasing collaboration with the staff, parents and governors, place an important focus on building a reflective approach to school improvement. The recent changes made to the self-evaluation processes are designed to ensure further improvement in the children's learning and the standards they attain.
- The school development planning process is underpinned by extensive and meaningful consultations with the children, their parents, the staff and the governors. The school needs to develop and embed agreed quality assurance arrangements, at all levels, drawing upon a range of first-hand evidence, to ensure that the priorities for improvement, agreed in the school development plan, are being met.
- The school values and encourages the positive contribution the parents make to developing further their role in their children's education. The school has an extensive range of extra-curricular activities and after-school arrangements which benefit the children's learning and development and supports their families.
- The governors continue to support fully the acting principal and staff in ensuring that all of the children reach their potential. Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school and nursery unit have comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children, which reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. In discussions with the inspectors, the children spoke enthusiastically about how the adults listen to their views and take their opinions into account when making changes to school routines. They reported that they feel safe and 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 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, namely:

- The school needs to develop and embed the quality assurance arrangements, at all levels, drawing upon a range of first-hand evidence, to ensure that the priorities for improvement, agreed in the school development plan, are being met.

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