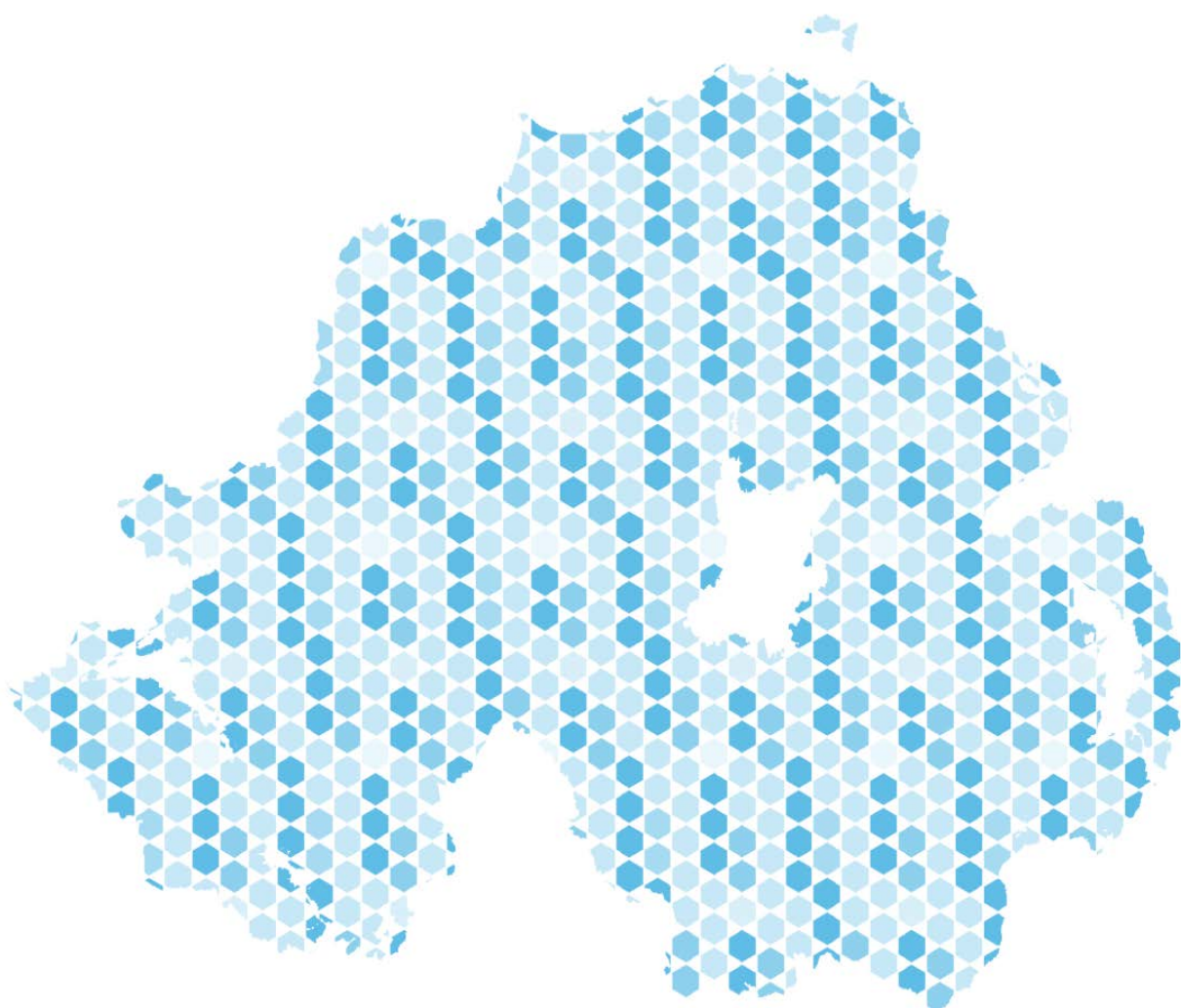


# PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St John the Baptist Primary  
School, Andersonstown,  
Co Antrim

Report of an Inspection in  
March 2015

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*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  
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## 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 two representatives from the governors;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Six percent of the parents responded to the questionnaires. Their responses indicated satisfaction with the work of the school and acknowledged the hardworking interim leadership team, the friendly staff and the improved ethos within the school. Approximately seventy percent of the teaching and non-teaching staff completed questionnaires and their responses were generally supportive of the work of the school. In particular, the staff commented positively on the recent opportunities to be involved in self-evaluation and school development planning and the improving working environment. A significant minority of the parents and the teaching and non-teaching staff raised concerns about leadership and management and communication within the school. Most of the staff raised concerns about resourcing. The ETI has reported a summary of responses to the acting principal and the representatives of the board of governors, and discussed with them the main issues and concerns 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 in the school; and
3. the quality of leadership and management.

## **3. Context**

St John the Baptist Primary School is situated on Finaghy Road North in Andersonstown. The school opened in September 2011 as an amalgamation of St John the Baptist Boys' School and St John the Baptist Girls' School. All of the children come from the surrounding area and are accommodated in one half of the school building. The other half of the school building is not being used by the children but is being maintained at a cost to the school. The current enrolment stands at 417 children. At the time of the inspection, approximately

45% of the children were entitled to free school meals and approximately 26% were on the special educational needs register. Due to a complex and challenging situation, an acting principal and acting vice-principal have been in post since the end of May 2014. Over the last two years, the staff absence levels have been very high. In 2012/13, it was double the Northern Ireland average; in 2013/14 this had increased to almost four-times the Northern Ireland average. At the time of the inspection, there were four temporary teachers employed in the school.

St John the Baptist Primary School	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	415	425	407	417
% Attendance (NI Average)	94.14%	93.7%	94.2%	94.44%
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	40%	41%	43%	44.5%
% (No) of children on SEN register	25.5%	16.5%	22.5%	26.1%
No. of children with statements of educational needs	*	10	12	14
No. of newcomers	*	*	*	8

**Source:** data as held by the school.

\* fewer than 5

#### 4. Overall findings of the inspection

<b>Overall Performance Level</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>
<b>Achievements and Standards</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Provision</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Leadership and Management</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>

#### 5. Achievements and standards

- The children are friendly, courteous to visitors and well-behaved. In the lessons observed, the children demonstrated enjoyment in their learning and engaged well in the activities. When given the opportunity, they co-operate well and support one another in paired and group work.
- The school's performance data shows that almost all of the children make good progress in English and most of the children make good progress in mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation.
- From the foundation stage, the children develop well their oral communication skills in a variety of contexts including play-based learning, class discussions and topic based role-play. By year 7, the children read with fluency and expression, write in a variety of forms and for a variety of purposes and give presentations with confidence, justifying their opinions with an appropriate level of vocabulary. In numeracy, the children have an appropriate knowledge and understanding of key mathematical concepts. By year 7, the highest achieving children apply competently a range of strategies when problem solving and explain their thinking with confidence, using the correct mathematical language.

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

- By year 7, almost all of those children who require additional support with aspects of their learning make very good progress in both English and mathematics and reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Throughout the school, the children attain satisfactory standards in information and communication technology (ICT) and use it to communicate their ideas and carry out research.

## **6. Provision**

- The quality of the recent planning and assessment is good. The teachers meet regularly to plan lessons and evaluate the children's learning. In a significant minority of the classes, the planning is clearly differentiated and the evaluations are used effectively to inform future learning. The staff have identified appropriately the need to review the medium-term planning to ensure there is a more consistent approach in the three key stages. All of the teachers mark the children's work regularly and, in the most effective practice, children are given opportunities to evaluate their work and the work of their peers.
- During the inspection, almost all of the teaching observed was good or better. In the most effective practice, there are positive working relationships between the teachers, classroom assistants and children which engender an enthusiasm for learning; teachers outline clearly the intended learning; and, questions and plenary sessions are used effectively to check the children's understanding and extend their thinking. In the less effective practice, in a small number of lessons observed, the activities are overly focused on completing low-level tasks rather than on developing the children's skills.
- The literacy curriculum provides good opportunities for the children to develop skills in the key areas of talking and listening, reading and writing. The focus on guided reading ensures children read a range of fiction texts; in order to develop further the children's reading skills, it is appropriate that the staff incorporate a wider range of non-fiction and media texts. The teachers create opportunities to write extended pieces in different contexts and for different purposes. The children need to have more regular opportunities to engage in re-drafting their work. Drama activities are used successfully to build children's confidence, creativity and to widen their vocabulary base.
- In numeracy, the children experience a balanced coverage of number, shape and space, measures and data-handling. Across the key stages, well-focused mental mathematics activities are used as an enjoyable and challenging introduction to lessons to consolidate the children's previous learning and to develop their use of the associated mathematical language. The children are competent working in pairs and groups and they are frequently encouraged to explain the mathematical reasoning associated with their answers. A particular strength of the mathematics provision is the teachers' emphasis on the importance of all children 'having a go'. The school has appropriately identified the need to develop further the teaching of number throughout the school, focusing on continuity and progression.

- The quality of the provision for children who require additional support with aspects of their learning is good. Early identification of need is prioritised and the school benefits from, and liaises well with, a wide range of external support agencies. In-school group withdrawal support is also effective in helping children to overcome barriers to their learning. The classroom assistants support capably the learning and holistic needs of the children, and contribute to monitoring their progress. The school has identified appropriately the need to review inconsistencies in the effectiveness of the individual education plans.
- The teachers and the classroom assistants know the children and their families very well and demonstrate a commitment to the pastoral care and welfare of the children. The children benefit from a good range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities which meet their needs, interests and abilities. To improve the pastoral care provision, the school council and Eco-council need to be more active; the children need to be involved more fully in making decisions about issues which affect them; and, the children's successes in all areas of school life should be celebrated more and built upon further.
- The school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating through the promotion of healthy breaks and the effective 'Cook It' programme. A wide range of sporting activities are available for the children, which encourage them to engage in energetic physical activity and to adopt healthy lifestyles.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The quality of leadership and management is inadequate. The staff from both schools have not developed sufficiently as a team since the amalgamation. A culture of uncertainty pervades the school which is impacting negatively on the ethos. A significant minority of the teaching and non-teaching staff and parents that responded to the inspection questionnaire indicated concerns about the instability of leadership and management in the school and the quality of communication. Most of the staff raised concerns about resources.
- While the acting senior leadership team, learning co-ordinators and governors have shown commitment to promoting a more cohesive collegial ethos at all levels and to developing with staff a shared vision for the school, this work is at an early stage and is not yet embedded in the school. Staff acknowledged the greater opportunities for involvement and an improving working environment, however, it will be important that this shared vision is embedded into all policies and practices throughout the school.
- The confidence and capacity of the learning co-ordinators requires further development in order to monitor the provision in their respective areas of responsibility and to ensure that the work they undertake is continuing to have a positive impact on the learning and teaching. This has been recognised by the senior leadership team.

- The school's processes for self-evaluation leading to improvement are at an early stage of development. The staff have begun to use the indicators within 'Together Towards Improvement' to evaluate objectively current practice and set priorities for improvement. Wider consultation to include children and governors in the evaluation process has been identified appropriately by the senior leadership team. While there is rigorous analysis and reporting of the school's internal data, there is a need to refine further the action plans and prioritise strategic areas for improvement. Currently there are too many actions and some are too generic. There needs to be an appropriate focus on learning and teaching strategies in order to raise further the achievements and standards of the children.
- Administrative routines in the school are not sufficiently rigorous. Currently many of the school policies are in draft format. There were no literacy or numeracy policies made available at the time of the inspection.
- Serious issues relating to financial accountability have been addressed recently, and should continue to be monitored closely by the senior leadership team. The senior leadership team was unable to produce a governors' annual report for 2012-13 and 2013-14 during the inspection.
- The school, since the amalgamation in 2011, has not made use of a large proportion of its building, due to health and safety concerns. This adversely affects the morale of staff members and limits the potential of the building to meet the needs of the children and the wider school community. There is an urgent need to address the underlying issues and so maximise the potential of the whole building. There are significant health and safety issues, detailed in the appendix.
- The level of staff absence over the last two academic years is a significant issue which needs to be addressed to provide greater continuity and progression in the children's learning and also to ensure that a substantial amount of the school financial resources are not diverted into providing substitute cover.
- The school is developing more effective links with parents, for example, through the recent parental questionnaire. Some of the areas that have been highlighted are beginning to be addressed. There are well-established and effective links with the local pre-schools and post-primary schools. Many of the children have the opportunity to take part, and have been successful, in local competitions in music and sport.
- While the governors have made strenuous efforts to address complex and sensitive matters within the school, issues remain. In exercising their duty of care, the governors have been proactive in commissioning recently a report on the health and well-being of staff and are committed to improving the quality of the working relationships within the school. 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. However, if confidence in the governance of the school is to be maintained, governors will need further well focussed and external support. The board of governors has yet to be reconstituted.



- 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 area needs to be addressed: there is a need for all staff to revisit the code of conduct document to ensure they are all involved in the process of the development of the code and are prepared to show commitment to it. The inspectors noted that the book which records safeguarding concerns only dates from September 2014. In discussions with the inspectors, the children reported that they feel very secure in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their well-being.

## **8. Conclusion**

Owing to the serious issues relating to leadership and management, accommodation and health and safety, the overall performance level is inadequate. The inspection has identified significant issues which should be addressed urgently if the school is to meet effectively the needs of all of the learners. These are the need:

- for the governors, the employing authority and the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) to address urgently the leadership arrangements and other issues in the school, in the best interests of the staff, children, parents and wider community to provide stable effective leadership;
- to develop the confidence and capacity of the senior leadership team and the learning co-ordinators to plan, monitor and evaluate more systematically the quality of the provision and action planning for improvement;
- to address aspects of the school accommodation that require significant improvement and updating to provide a suitable learning environment to meet the needs of the children; and
- to address the health and safety issues which are detailed in an appendix to this report.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-18 month period.

**Health and safety/accommodation**

1. Significant areas of the school's accommodation fall short of acceptable standards and are in poor decorative order.
2. There is a need to carry out a health and safety audit of the building; in particular, the fire safety systems in the foundation stage and fire exits to the key stage 2 corridor.
3. Many of the exterior windows are single glazed with ill fitting metal window frames. Consequently, there is an adverse effect on the children's learning due to the cold temperatures and draughts.
4. A number of the radiators in the corridors become excessively hot and could pose a health and safety risk to the children.
5. The children have to traverse a narrow uneven pathway to the rear of the building in all weather conditions to access the dining hall and the playgrounds.
6. The school has no external closed-circuit television cameras to monitor the safety and security of the entrances, exits and playgrounds.
7. The reading resource room 1 requires a glass vision panel in the door.

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