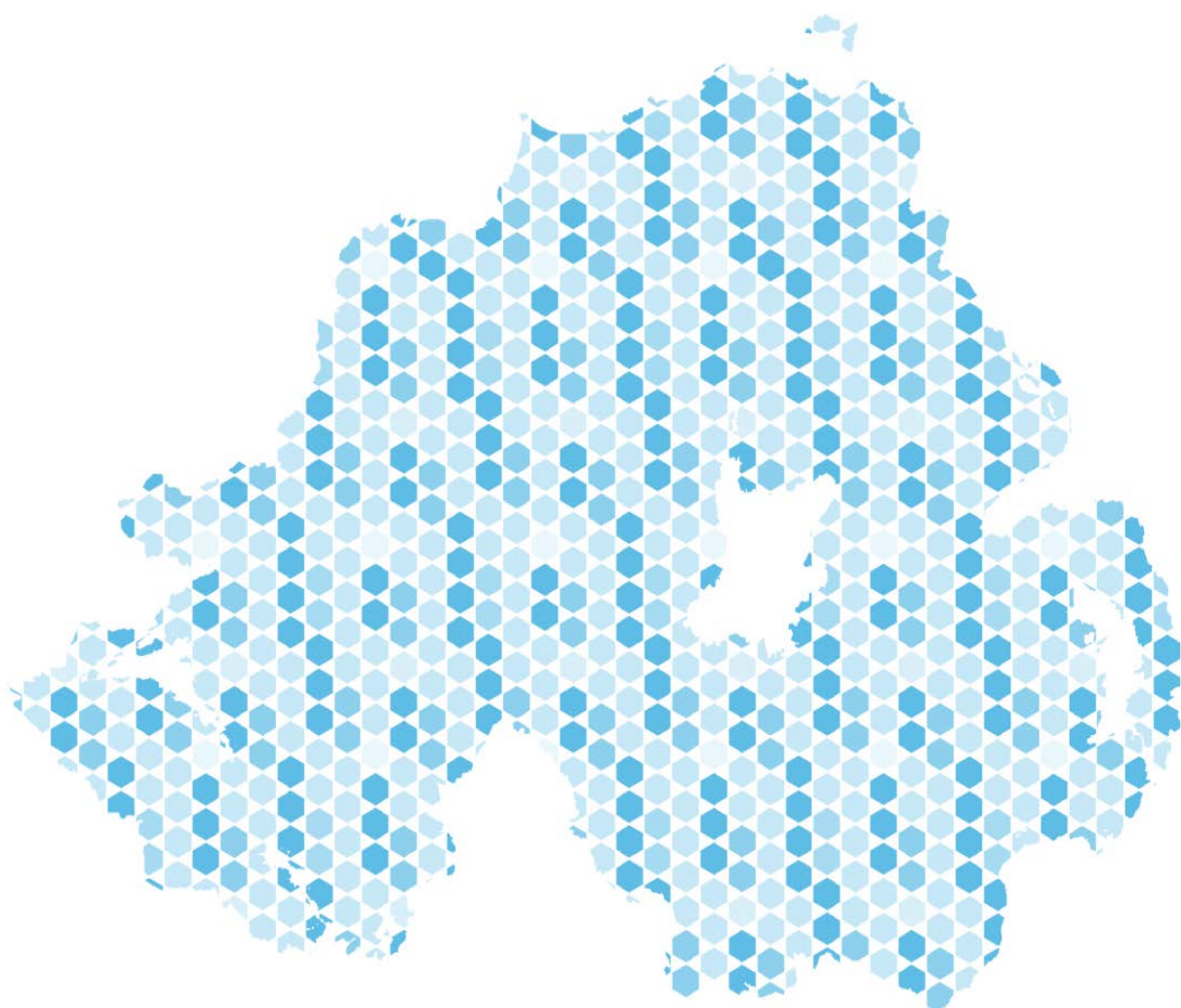


PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Kevin's Primary School,
Belfast

Report of an Inspection in
February 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
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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 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.

Forty-eight percent of parents responded to the questionnaires with one-half providing additional written comments. Almost all of the responses indicated very high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted their appreciation for: the hard work and support of the staff and the high level of pastoral care they provide for the children; the children's enjoyment in many aspects of school life and the progress they make in their learning; and the opportunities provided by the school to help the parents support their children's learning. Most of the teaching staff responded to the questionnaires and all their responses were very positive about the life and work of the school. Almost all of the support staff who responded were very positive in their evaluations. In particular, the teaching and support staff reported positively on the leadership and management at all levels and the positive working relationships across the school. ETI has reported to the principal and a representative of the board of governors the main issues emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions, including the very few concerns raised.

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

St Kevin's Primary School is situated on the Falls Road in Belfast. Most of the children come from the surrounding area of the middle Falls, Whiterock and St James's areas. Over the past four years, the enrolment has increased by approximately 10% and now stands at 522 children. The school is currently oversubscribed. Approximately 68% of the children are entitled to free school meals and around 31% of the pupils have been identified by the school as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning. The principal has been in post for 18 months and the vice-principal was appointed in Oct 2014.

St Kevin's Primary School	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	478	496	532	522
% Attendance	93.2	92.9	93.3	94.6
FSME Percentage ¹	59.6	61.7	66.3	68.1
% (No) of children on SEN register	36.2	32.9	33.6	31.3
No. of children with statements of educational needs	14	16	12	11
No. of newcomers	5	9	8	10

Source: data as held by the school.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall Performance Level	Very Good
Achievements and Standards	Very Good
Provision	Very Good
Leadership and Management	Very Good

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are highly motivated to learn and their behaviour around the school is exemplary. From an early stage, they have high levels of independence and take pride in their learning. The children are respectful towards one another and work well in pairs and groups demonstrating very good personal and social skills. Across the key stages, they develop thinking skills, team-working skills, and self-management in response to well-planned learning activities.
- The school's performance data shows that almost all children in literacy and most of the children in numeracy, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, achieve standards that are in line with their ability or above expectation.
- In literacy, the children have very good listening skills and, when given the opportunity, express themselves confidently through meaningful class and group discussions. The children read fluently, with expression and understanding and display high levels of interest in reading for enjoyment. The quality and accuracy of the children's written work across the curriculum is of a very high standard showing progress across the three key stages.

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

- In numeracy, the children have a good understanding of their work across each of the areas of mathematics. The children are developing and increasing their confidence in using appropriate mathematical vocabulary. By year 7, the most able children demonstrate flexibility in their thinking and can offer alternative strategies to solve mathematical problems. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the key mathematics concepts which they can apply to real-life contexts across the curriculum. The senior leadership team (SLT) has identified appropriately the need to raise further the standards in mathematics and has put in place a range of appropriate strategies.
- The children's achievements and standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are very good. They complete a range of ICT tasks, and, in the best practice, in a majority of the classes, the teachers incorporate frequently problem solving and investigative activities which allow the children to develop their thinking skills and personal capabilities.

6. Provision

- The teachers' planning has been reviewed recently and guides effectively the work in class. In most classes, the planning focuses closely on the knowledge, understanding and skills to be developed by the various ability groups within the class. The teachers' evaluations indicate the extent to which the learning aims were achieved and inform appropriately the next phase of planning for learning. This very good practice needs to be developed more consistently throughout the school.
- In the very effective classroom practice observed, in approximately three-fifths of the lessons, the teachers used a range of strategies to motivate the children and promote high levels of interest and engagement. The tasks and level of support provided by the staff were matched well to meet the children's varying needs and abilities. The lessons were well-paced and the children worked very well in pairs and groups. Information and communication technology (ICT) was integrated effectively into classroom activities to support and extend the children's learning. The teachers used questions and plenary sessions well to check understanding and extend the children's thinking. Consequently, the children enjoyed the lessons, contributed well and made appropriate progress in their learning.
- The teachers and classroom assistants provide effective verbal feedback throughout the lessons to help the children improve their work. The teachers mark the children's work regularly and there are very good examples of how the teachers use the well-conceived marking policy to give the children precise guidance on how to develop further their work. This very good practice supports the children well in working towards personal targets for improvement. The children use effectively self and peer assessment to review their own and others' efforts and, notably, the parents comment regularly on their child's work.
- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are supported effectively and nurtured sensitively by the teachers and the skilled classroom assistants, both in class and during withdrawal sessions. The school has invested in an extensive range of programmes and initiatives to meet the wide and varying needs of the children. It is appropriate that the leadership and management has identified the need to co-ordinate and evaluate more systematically the impact of the various intervention programmes, in particular

the extensive withdrawal programme, on the children's learning experiences and achievements. The school is currently reviewing the individual education plans to inform and guide further the planning and teaching strategies to be used; in the most effective practice, the individual education plans are used well by the teachers to guide the learning and engage the children in reviewing their progress.

- The staff and children have created a literacy rich environment; stimulating displays reflect and celebrate the high quality of the children's work and provide support for further learning. There is an appropriate focus on the development of language through, for example, the wide range of resources, themed events and the effective modelling of language by the staff. The children develop the core literacy skills in a systematic manner as they progress through the school. The play-based learning sessions provide the children with valuable opportunities to use and develop their language and literacy skills. The programme for the development of reading is well structured ensuring that the children use an appropriate range of strategies and experience a range of texts. The teaching of writing is highly effective and is a particular strength of the school. The children have very good opportunities to plan, edit and redraft their work and to write in meaningful contexts across the curriculum.
- The teachers use a number of mental mathematics teaching strategies which develops well the children's mathematical thinking and agility. The recent focus on developing the children's understanding of number processes is having a positive impact; most are developing their understanding in this area. Across the school, the teachers link the concepts of addition and subtraction to practical, written and graphical activities which develop well the children's mathematical problem solving skills. While the current numeracy scheme covers all of the areas of the statutory curriculum, it needs to be refined further to ensure greater continuity, progression and consistency in the children's mathematical learning across the school. It is appropriate that the school have identified this as a priority.
- The quality of the provision for pastoral care is outstanding. It is underpinned by an inclusive ethos, a well-delivered preventative curriculum and the effective engagement with external agencies to meet the wide-ranging needs of the children. The children's social and emotional development is supported well, and their achievements are recognised and celebrated by a well-conceived positive behaviour policy and a comprehensive rewards system, devised in consultation with the children and integrated well into all areas of school life. Through the highly effective student council, the children engage in active democracy, undertake leadership roles and contribute meaningfully to the improvement of their school.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity through the effective implementation of a healthy eating policy and a wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The senior leadership team (SLT) is committed to meeting the needs of the children and gives a high priority, through the school development plan, to providing high quality pastoral care and raising standards further.

- The senior leadership team (SLT) inspires high levels of confidence and respect from the staff, parents and children and gives a strategic direction for the work of the school based on their systematic self-evaluation processes. These processes include consulting widely with the school community and making effective use of a wide range of performance data and other first-hand evidence to inform directly the school's priorities. The SLT has led the staff well in using performance data to identify low and underachievement and to track the progress of individual children. The actions taken as a result, including the broad range of interventions to support the children's individual and learning needs, have been effective in promoting improvement and raising standards.
- At middle-management level, most of the co-ordinators, challenged and supported where necessary by the SLT, are developing effectively their capacity for self-evaluation. They are using an appropriate range of evidence including classroom visits to inform their action plans and identify priorities for learning and teaching. For literacy, there are rigorous processes in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of the provision and the standards achieved by the children which informs directly a collaborative approach to whole-school planning. The monitoring, evaluating and action-planning processes for numeracy need to be improved in these respects. The school has identified appropriately the need to develop further the role of the middle-managers, and to promote more shared leadership opportunities to link effectively the work of the SLT and the co-ordinators.
- The staff appreciate and foster the contribution of parents and the wider community to the children's learning. The staff arrange regular educational and cultural events for families and they work with partner organisations to provide a range of accredited courses for adults. These experiences have successfully re-engaged many parents in education, raising confidence and aspirations and assisting them in supporting their children. The staff have developed a wide range of links with businesses, pre-schools and post-primary schools which enhance and enrich the curricular and pastoral provision and prepare the children well for the next stage of their education.
- 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 are well informed about, and involved in, the life and work of the school and they are very supportive of the principal and the staff. The governors have identified appropriately the need to develop further the arrangements to review the work of key co-ordinators to provide higher levels of support and challenge where appropriate.
- 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 safe 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 very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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