

# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Nicholas' Primary School,  
Carrickfergus, Co Antrim

Report of an Inspection in  
November 2013

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

Questionnaire	Number issued (total number in the school per category)	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	119	25	21%	9
Teaching staff	8	8	100%	*
Support staff	8	8	100%	*

\* fewer than 5

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) is trialling a range of methods for collecting the views of parents about the life and work of the school. As a result, the response rate to the parental questionnaire may be low.

## 2. Context

- St Nicholas' Primary School is situated in the town of Carrickfergus in County Antrim. The children attending the school come from a wide catchment area. The school enrolment has increased from 134 to 168 in the past four years.
- In recent years, there has been a significant growth in the number of children with English as an additional language attending the school; 23% of the children on the school register have been identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

St Nicholas' Primary School, Carrickfergus	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/2014
Enrolment	134	143	147	168
% Attendance (NI Average)	95.1%	96.1%	95.2%	-
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	12.7%	16.1%	26.5%	28%
% (No) of children on SEN register	11.9%	21%	21%	23%
No. of children with statements of educational needs	3.7%	2.8%	2%	1.8%
No. of newcomers	3%	8.4%	19%	19.6%

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

\*fewer than 5

### 3. 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
- the quality of leadership and management.

### 4. Overall finding

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

### Key findings of the inspection

#### 5. Achievements and standards

- The children's behaviour is exemplary; most of them are well motivated, attentive and engage well with the tasks set. They respect one another, co-operate well on paired and group tasks, and show good levels of enjoyment in their learning. The children are increasing in confidence through the use of self- and peer assessment which is helping them to improve their work further. As they progress through the school, the children demonstrate increasing independence in their learning and they develop a wide range of social and interpersonal skills.
- Most of the children enjoy reading and can read with very good levels of fluency; the school has identified the need to develop further the children's comprehension skills.

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

- The children engage well in mental mathematics activities and they make good use of mathematical language. By the end of key stage (KS) 2, the children have a very good understanding of the different strategies for solving mathematical problems.
- An analysis of the end of key stage (KS) 2 performance data, in three of the past four years, shows that the school's performance is consistently above the Northern Ireland (NI) average.\* The performance in both English and mathematics in two of the past four years is in line with the average for schools in the same free school meals category. The school's internal performance data shows that most of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, achieve standards in English and mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation.
- The children use information and communication technology (ICT) with confidence and achieve good outcomes in the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) ICT Accreditation scheme.

## **6. Provision for learning**

- The quality of the teaching observed ranged from outstanding to satisfactory with most of the teaching being good or better. In the best practice, the teachers linked the learning to the children's interests and experiences. There were high levels of challenge, classroom organisation supported well the children's independence and the learning intentions were relevant and used effectively by the teachers to focus the children on their learning. The classroom assistants were purposefully employed and were very good facilitators to the children's learning.
- The staff have successfully made useful cross-curricular links within the detailed planning for both English and mathematics. There are very good opportunities for the children to write across the curriculum. In the best practice, there is clear differentiation based on both the effective use of data and the teachers own evaluations to inform future planning.
- The children who require additional support with their learning integrate fully with all aspects of school life; they work well alongside their peers.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is outstanding. The inclusive nature of the school is evident through the value placed upon each member of the school community and the celebration of the children's work and achievements.
- The school places a high priority on providing children with access to a wide range of ICT in support of their learning in literacy and numeracy.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity; the children are encouraged to eat healthy lunches and they have regular opportunities to engage in outdoor physical activity. The provision encourages the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

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\* Due to the current transition period in the arrangements for statutory assessment, this analysis of the end of KS2 performance data is based on the outcomes up to but not including the 2012/13 school year.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The leadership and management place a strong emphasis on creating a child-centred learning environment and a culture to inspire the whole school community to achieve and fulfil their potential in the best interests of the children. The leadership is developing a culture of self-evaluation at all levels and, in addition, effective use is made of a range of appropriate data to inform priorities within the school development plan. The action plans are clearly focused on teaching and learning.
- Based on the evidence provided at the time of the inspection, the parents, staff and the school community can have a high degree of confidence in the aspects of the governance evaluated. The governors are well informed about all aspects of school life and recognise their role in supporting the staff as they develop the provision within the school and they provide appropriate challenge when required.
- 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 feel 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 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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