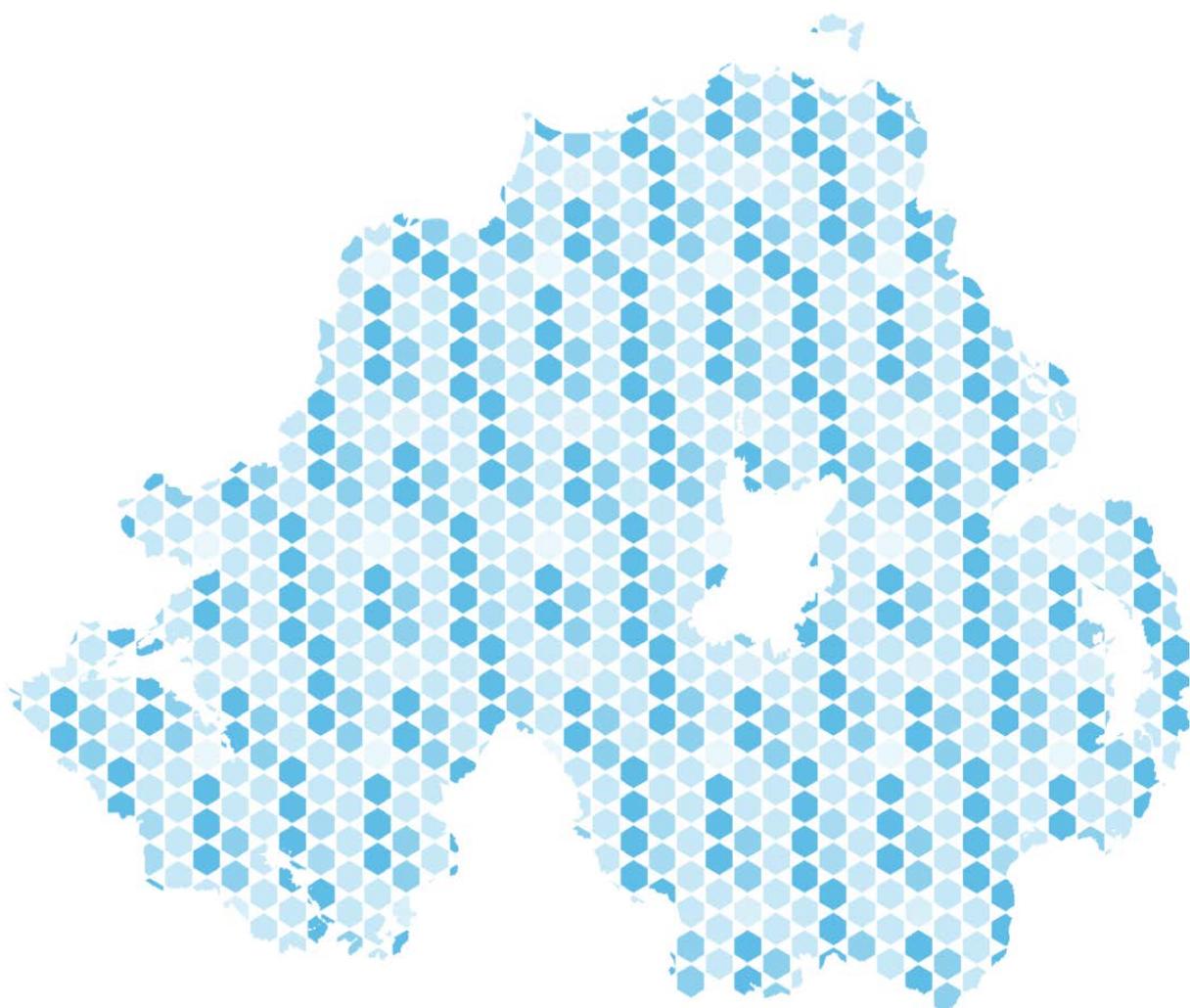


PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Oliver Plunkett Primary
School, Belfast

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

Thirty percent of parents responded to the questionnaires. The responses to the parental questionnaires indicated very high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted their appreciation of: the approachable, caring and diligent staff; the high expectations for the children's learning; the wide range of targeted support programmes available to the children and parents; the effective communication at all levels; and, the strong leadership. Eighty-nine percent of the teaching and support staff completed questionnaires; their responses were wholly positive. They emphasised the quality of the working relationships across the school, the supportive, collegial ethos across the year groups and the strong links with the parents and wider community. The ETI has reported to the principal and representatives of the board of governors the nature of the responses and that no significant issues were raised in 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 literacy and numeracy in the school; and
3. the quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

St Oliver Plunkett Primary School is situated in the neighbourhood renewal area of Glencolin in West Belfast. Almost all of the children attending the school come from the immediate area. The enrolment has increased steadily over the past four years and currently stands at 641 children. At the time of inspection, 61% of the children are entitled to free school meals and 14% of the children have been identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

Since March 2014, there have been significant staffing changes at senior leadership level including the appointment of the principal, restructuring of the senior leadership team and the reconstitution of the board of governors.

The school has attained accreditation as an 'iTeach Champion School' and has equipped each child with a tablet device with the aim of developing the effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance learning and teaching and to prepare the children for the digital demands of the twenty-first century. The school also facilitates the provision of training programmes for parents to enable them to support their child through digital learning.

St Oliver Plunkett Primary School	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	575	583	614	641
% Attendance (NI Average)	94.3 (95.2)	94.6 (94.9)	93.5 (95.6)	-
FSME Percentage ¹	53.7	59.3	58.9	61.3
% (No) of children on SEN register	16.5 (95)	14.1 (82)	16.9 (104)	14.0 (90)
No. of children with statements of educational need	10	8	11	15
No. of newcomers	*	*	*	*

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

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 articulate, friendly and mannerly and their behaviour is exemplary. They are motivated, enthusiastic learners who settle quickly to work. The children have very good personal and social skills and work well independently and with others. Across all key stages, they respond very well to the learning activities which develop effectively and progressively their thinking skills and personal capabilities.
- The school's performance data shows that almost all 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.

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

- In all key stages, the children produce high quality writing across a range of forms. They contribute to class discussions and present to their peers with confidence, developing good talking and listening skills. By year 7, the most able children read with fluency, accuracy and expression. They spoke positively about the ways in which their enjoyment of reading is fostered in the school and they talked with enthusiasm about the books they choose beyond the classroom.
- In all key stages, the children enjoy learning mathematics, talk enthusiastically about their work and present their work to a high standard. By year 7, the most able children have a very good knowledge and understanding of most areas of the mathematics curriculum and can carry out mental mathematics calculations with accuracy and speed. They can apply their learning to a variety of real life and contemporary contexts, and can solve and set mathematical problems with competence and confidence.
- The comprehensive tracking and evaluation of the progress of the children who are receiving support with their learning indicates that almost all of the children are making very good progress.
- The children's achievements and standards in ICT are outstanding. In a progressive manner, across all key stages, the children develop excellent skills in using a wide range of ICT devices, programmes and applications confidently and appropriately to enhance their learning

6. Provision

- The teachers' planning is effective and guides well the classroom practice. In the best practice, the teachers' regular evaluations of the planning focus appropriately on the extent to which successful learning has taken place and are used well to inform future planning. The planning for literacy is very effective in promoting coherence and progression in the children's learning. The current focus on writing ensures the systematic development of the children's ability to write for a range of purposes and audiences. The planning for mathematics is coherent and ensures that most aspects of mathematics are met with appropriate frequency.
- Most of the lessons observed were effective at promoting successful learning. In the most effective practice, in approximately one-half of the lessons observed, the teachers used skilful questioning to challenge and extend the children's creative and critical thinking. The teachers built effectively on the children's prior learning, developed further their independence and used effective plenary sessions to consolidate the learning. In all of the lessons observed, the classroom assistants worked well in partnership with the teachers and supported effectively both individual and small groups of children with their learning. In the less effective practice, in a minority of lessons, the work was not appropriately challenging to meet the needs of all of the children. The over-direction by the teachers restricted the opportunities for the children to develop their language and self-management skills and there were missed opportunities to build upon and extend the children's responses.

- The children's work is marked regularly and most of the teachers provide the children with precise guidance on how to improve their work further; this effective marking supports well the school's practice where the children identify their own targets for further improvement.
- The provision for children who require additional support with their learning is highly effective. Appropriate information is collated prior to the children starting the foundation stage; this information is then used to identify early the specific needs of each child and is used effectively to inform learning and teaching. Individual targets set in the education plans are specific, measurable and are reviewed regularly to ensure an effective level of challenge to support progression. A dedicated team of classroom assistants work alongside the teaching staff to provide effective support in class and through withdrawal sessions for children with a wide range of needs. The children's progress in the withdrawal sessions is monitored closely and evaluated weekly to respond in a timely manner to the needs of the children. There is very effective liaison and sharing of information between school staff and outside agencies.
- Literacy is promoted actively through regular celebrations and displays of the children's work. The provision is enriched through numerous events with a literacy focus, involving the children, their families and the wider community. Information and communication technology supports very effectively those children who may be reluctant to write or to present their work to their class.
- The children develop their mathematical language, knowledge, understanding and skills through well-planned practical mathematics sessions, problem-solving activities and investigations which foster the children's enjoyment of mathematics. Throughout this year, the teachers have focused specifically on the development of the children's mental mathematics strategies; there is evidence that the children are making very good progress in this area and, therefore, are developing a greater knowledge and understanding of mathematical language and processes.
- The quality of the pastoral care in the school is outstanding. The school has a well-embedded, inclusive ethos where every child matters; furthermore, the working relationships among the children and between the children and the staff are respectful and caring. The children enjoy an excellent range of extra-curricular activities, which enhance their academic, personal and social development. In discussions with the children, they spoke enthusiastically about a range of school initiatives used to develop their leadership skills and their understanding of personal and civic rights and responsibilities. They spoke positively of how their views on aspects of the life and work of the school are sought and acted on through, for example, their participation in a vibrant School Council and the Eco- Committee.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, through for example, the early morning breakfast club and the extensive variety of sporting activities which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The senior leadership has, through their engagement with children, parents, staff, governors, and the local community, articulated a shared, strategic vision for school improvement and has developed a supportive ethos throughout the school, adopting a collaborative approach to the co-ordination of all areas of learning. Ongoing staff development is a key priority within the school and is linked appropriately to the school improvement agenda. The teaching and support staff engage in a wide range of external professional development opportunities, aligned closely to the priorities identified in the school development plan (SDP). The leadership at all levels are committed fully to enhancing provision to ensure the timely identification of low- or under-achievement and, subsequently, initiates appropriate strategies through the school's 'Identified Educational Need' programme to support these children; there is clear evidence that this work is improving the attainment in numeracy and literacy of the children.
- A comprehensive SDP and associated action plans are informed appropriately by the rigorous analysis of the school's internal performance data and effective consultation with the children, parents, staff and governors. The action plans are effective at guiding well the improvement work in key aspects of provision. The senior leadership team and co-ordinators need to monitor and evaluate more robustly the outworking of a number of the action plans to ensure that the many examples of best practice in learning and teaching that exist in the school are disseminated more consistently across all of the key stages.
- The links which the school has developed with parents and organisations in the local community are well established and are used effectively to enrich the children's learning experiences. The curriculum is enhanced by the children's participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) initiatives, some of which are delivered by a range of external agencies. The parents receive high levels of pastoral support from the staff to meet the holistic needs of their children. The close collaboration with local community organisations has helped to secure beneficial resources, such as an art therapy programme, to assist and progress the children with their learning. A large number of parents participate in a wide range of ICT classes offered by the school and external organisations to develop further their own ICT skills and to help enhance their capacity to support their children's learning at home.
- 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. The governors are actively involved in the school development planning process and provide a challenge function in relation to achievements and standards, finance and the curriculum.
- 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 the discussions with the inspectors, the year 6 children reported that they felt very secure 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.

Health and safety/accommodation

1. There is inadequate toileting provision for the children in the foundation stage classes to accommodate the number of children. The current lack of provision is, therefore, a health and safety risk.

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