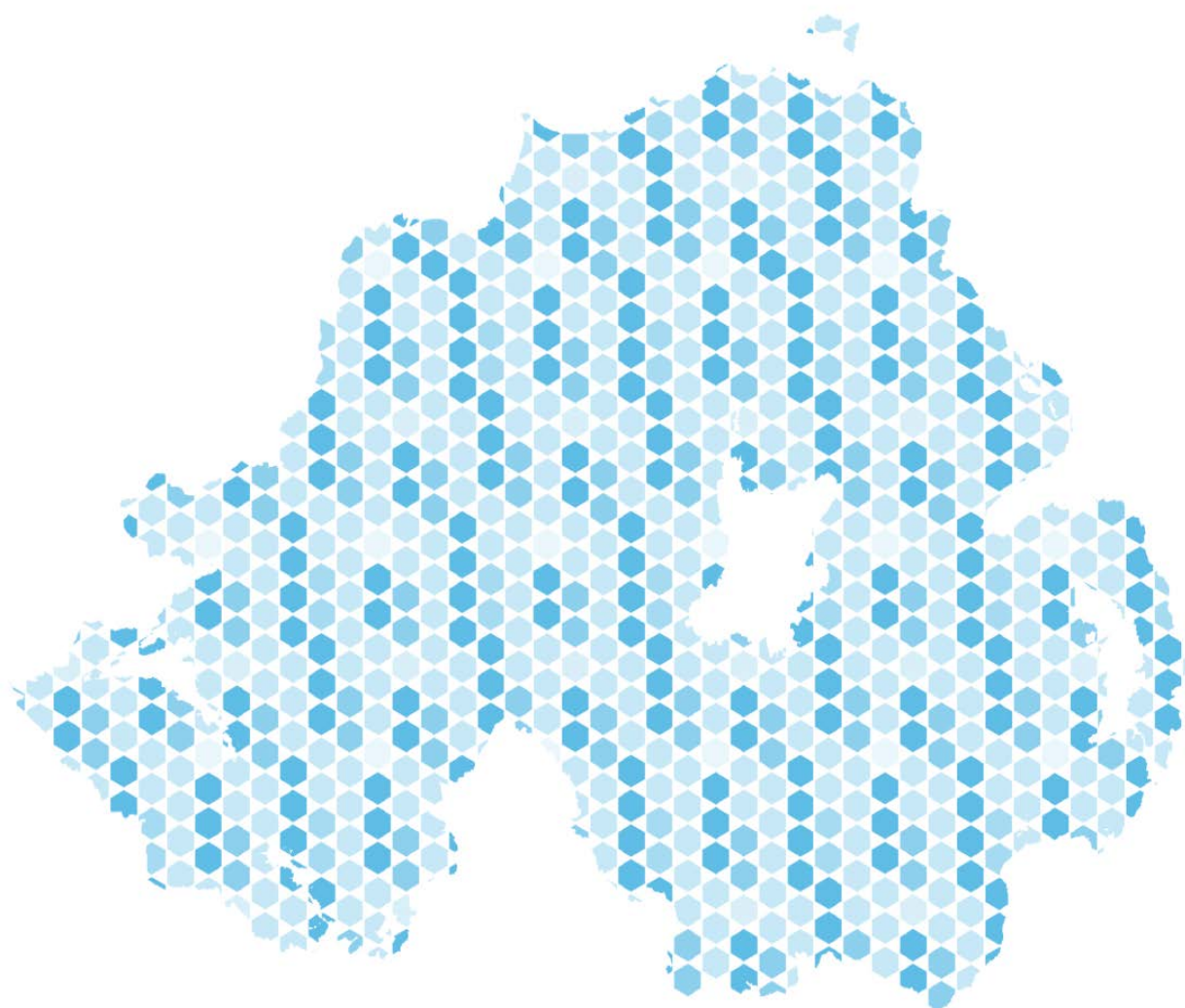


PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training
Inspectorate

The Royal School Armagh
Preparatory Department

Report of an Inspection in
March 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

Contents

Section	Page
1. Inspection method and evidence base	1
2. Focus of inspection	1
3. Context	1
4. Overall findings of the inspection	2
5. Achievements and standards	2
6. Provision	3
7. Leadership and management	3
8. Conclusion	4

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-six percent of parents responded to the questionnaires. They indicated very high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted their appreciation of the staff's approachability and dedication. They reported that they value the attention given to developing the whole child, the wide range of activities provided and the caring and supportive ethos. All of the teaching staff completed questionnaires and their responses were wholly positive; they emphasised the quality of the working relationships across the preparatory department. ETI has reported to the head of the preparatory department and a representative of the board of governors the main issues emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

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
3. the quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

The preparatory department of The Royal School Armagh is situated in the attractive grounds of the senior school, on the outskirts of the City of Armagh. Most of the children attending the preparatory department come from the greater Armagh area and a small number travel from much further afield; the enrolment has declined slightly in recent years and stands currently at 38 children. Approximately 8% of the children in the preparatory department are identified as having special educational needs. There have been several changes in the staffing including the appointment of a new Head of the Preparatory Department who took up post in May 2014.

The Royal School Armagh Preparatory Department	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	46	33	43	38
% Attendance (NI Average)	96.8	95.7	96.9	94.7
FSME Percentage ¹	0	0	0	0
% (No) of children on SEN register	13	9	7	8
No. of children with statements of educational needs	*	*	0	0
No. of newcomers	0	0	0	0

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 well-motivated and demonstrate high levels of engagement and enjoyment in their learning. Throughout the preparatory department, there is an emphasis on developing independent thinking and learning and the children self-manage their learning in a mature way. The children interact confidently with their teachers and with one another and are able to give well-reasoned, extended opinions in whole class and group discussions. The teachers have appropriately high expectations of the children which are exemplified in the quality of the children's work.
- The preparatory department's performance data shows that almost all children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make progress in English and mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation.
- By year 7, the children read fluently, with expression and discuss their reading texts with a very good level of inferential understanding. The children's writing is of a very good standard across a range of writing forms.
- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning make good progress commensurate with their levels of ability. The children work in a confident manner alongside their peers.
- The children use confidently a range of appropriate information and communication technology (ICT) devices and software to support well their literacy and numeracy as well as other aspects of their learning. The children research information, work with images and produce high quality booklets and presentations.

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

6. Provision

- The teachers' medium and long-term planning is comprehensive and it is well informed by suitable evaluation of the children's previous learning and the teachers' knowledge of their different needs. In the most effective practice, learning and teaching is well structured, meets effectively the range of individual requirements within the classroom and has very good pace, challenge and progression. The teachers make skilful use of questioning to develop the children's thinking and oral responses. They use an effective range of assessment strategies to provide constructive feedback to the children that enables them to improve the quality of their work.
- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified early through the effective use of teacher observations and the analysis of internal performance data. The individual education plans guide well the learning and teaching and the intervention strategies are tailored to the particular needs of individual children.
- The teachers provide a stimulating learning environment for literacy which promotes the children's curiosity and thinking skills. They integrate literacy well within the World Around Us and across the curriculum to provide meaningful contexts for learning. The children develop their confidence in talking and listening through well-planned drama activities and opportunities to take part in local debating competitions and drama festivals. Reading is taught systematically and focuses appropriately on the development of the children's reading skills; their enjoyment of reading is promoted further through reading themed events, such as, book week and the use of the well stocked central library.
- The pastoral care provision in the preparatory department is very good. This provision is characterised by the welcoming, child-centred culture and the very good working relationships amongst the staff and children. The children develop their leadership skills and take responsibility for others, through, for example, the school council and the 'buddy system.' In discussions with the children from year 6 and year 7, they spoke positively about their wide range of learning experiences.
- The preparatory department gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating through their daily participation in the 'Healthy Break' scheme. The children develop further their knowledge of healthy eating habits through their involvement with Navan Fort's 'Apple Week' and their participation in the harvest play. There is a suitable range of sporting initiatives within the school day and through extra-curricular activities and competitions.

7. Leadership and management

- The recently appointed Head of the Preparatory Department has a clear and strategic vision for the life and work of the school. The development plan has an appropriate range of action plans which are informed by consultation, analysis of performance data and the needs of the children. The staff have appropriately identified the need to develop further the role of the co-ordinator and the practice in play-based learning.

- There are effective arrangements in place for communicating and consulting with parents to involve them appropriately in their children's education. The parent-teacher association provides considerable financial assistance to the preparatory department, for example, to purchase resources such as laptops, as well as organising fund-raising events. The children benefit from the links with the senior school to provide wider learning opportunities, for example, from specialist lessons in music, ICT, languages and sport. The range of links with community groups enhances the children's learning, such as, their participation in the community project 'Waking of Brian Boru' that contributed well to the development of their communication skills.
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, ETI's evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors expressed their support for the staff in the preparatory department and praised them for their hard work and commitment to the children.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the preparatory department 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 children reported that they felt very secure in school and knew what to do if they had any concerns about their well-being.
- It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the preparatory department's provision and school budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the children and the staff.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this preparatory department is very good. The preparatory department is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2015

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the ETI website: www.etini.gov.uk