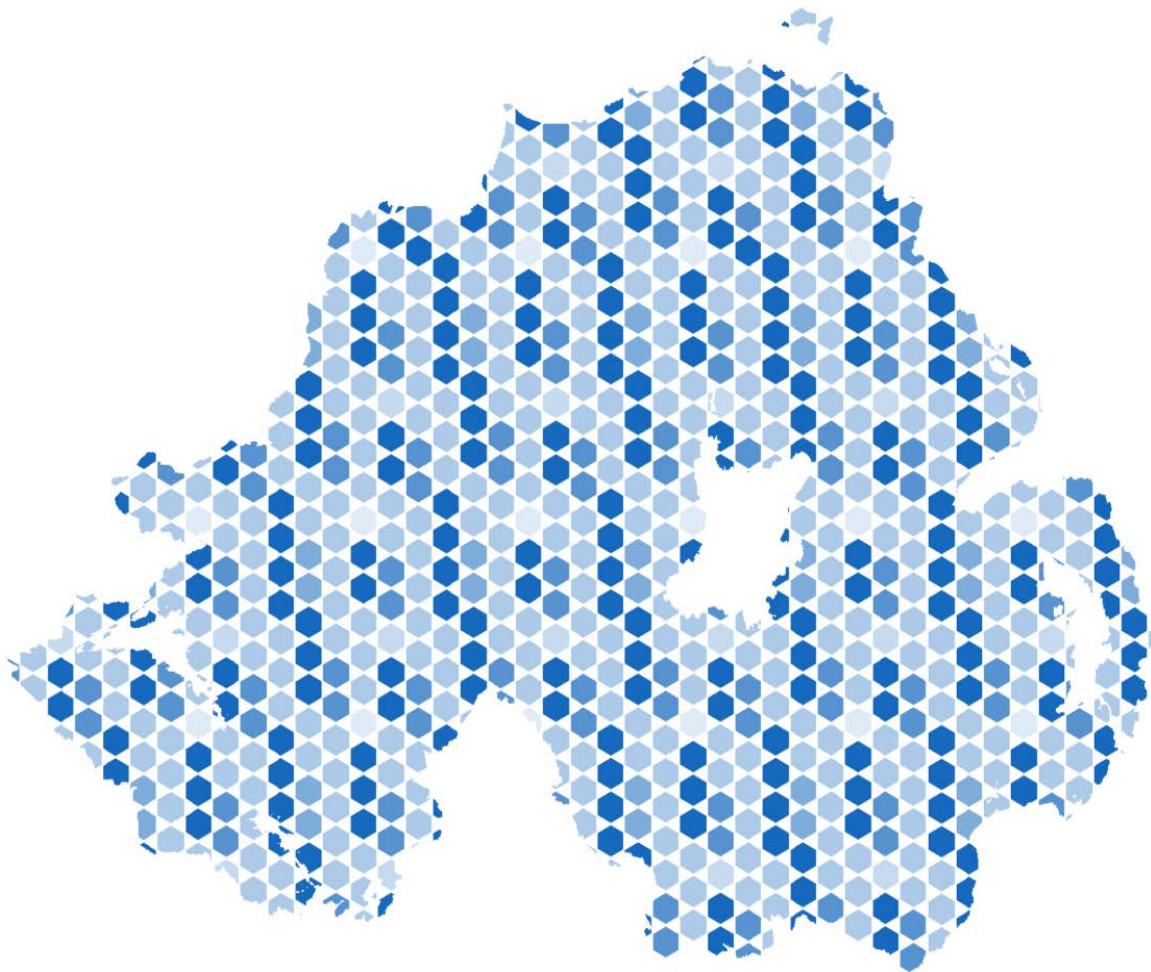


# SPECIAL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Rosstulla School,  
Newtownabbey

Report of an Inspection in  
January 2015

## 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

Inspectors observed teaching and learning, scrutinised documentation and the pupils' written work, and held formal and informal discussions with pupils, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

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

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	160	*	*	*
Teachers	19	6	32%	*
Support Staff	15	*	*	*

\* fewer than 5

The ETI is trialling a range of methods for collecting the views of parents/carers about the life and work of the school. As a result, the response rate to the parent/carer questionnaires may be low.

There were no parental questionnaire responses. The teacher and support staff questionnaire responses were positive, and indicate support for the principal and life of the school.

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of special 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-special.htm>.

## 2. Context

Rosstulla School provides education for pupils, aged four to seventeen years, with moderate learning difficulties, some of whom have additional complex needs. The school is set on a shared educational site in Jordanstown, County Antrim, and the majority of pupils are from a wide area within the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB). At the time of the inspection, seven teachers were absent.

Rosstulla School	20011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	167	170	172	173
% Attendance	91%	89%	91%	93%
Teachers	18	19	19	19
Classroom assistants	13	14	13	15
FSME Percentage <sup>[1]</sup>	41%	42%	45%	51%
No. of newcomers	*	*	*	*

\* fewer than 5

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

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

### 3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the pupils' achievements and outcomes;
- 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 Outcomes</b>	<b>Very good</b>
<b>Provision</b>	<b>Very good</b>
<b>Leadership and Management</b>	<b>Very good</b>

### Key findings of the inspection

#### 5. Achievements and standards

- The pupils are motivated and engage enthusiastically with learning; their interaction with each other and staff is respectful and polite. They work competently with a variety of information and communication technology (ICT) resources, which support and enhance their learning, particularly those pupils pursuing GCSE accredited courses.
- The pupils achieve very well in a range of external examinations that are chosen by staff to enable them to achieve to their full potential. By the time they leave school, almost all the pupils make very good progress in literacy and numeracy, and achieve level two or level three in Entry Level Qualification (ELQ) Essential Skills Literacy, and Numeracy. The majority of pupils achieve a broad range of Council for the Curriculum Examination and Assessment (CCEA) accredited qualifications including Occupational Studies, Creative Crafts, Performing Arts and BTEC level 2 in Horse Care. The pupils achieve well in the recently introduced and comprehensive range of subjects at GCSE including Expressive Arts, ICT, Motor Vehicle Road Users Studies and Art and Design.
- The pupils achieve very high standards in behaviour, social and independent living skills, and they are helpful to visitors in school. Their communication skills, confidence and creativity develop very well, enabling them to participate in a wide range of work placements and further education opportunities.
- The senior pupils understand the pathways and qualifications they require for their intended career plans, and for employment or further study. Most of the pupils exhibit excellent skills for transition to appropriate post-school placements, and progress well to further education, training and employment, in line with their interests and capabilities.

## 6. Provision

- The quality of the teaching in the majority of lessons observed was very good or better. In the most effective lessons, the teachers used a broad range of active learning strategies to interest and motivate the pupils, including explorative approaches, encouraging sustained periods of concentration. There was clear and appropriate differentiation and additional support where required, for pupils' learning and behaviour through well-planned, additional strategies and effective team work in class. In the less-effective practice, lessons were over-directed with a lack of differentiation, a slow pace, and expectations were too low.
- The teachers' planning is well structured and based on extensive assessments of the pupils' skills and capabilities. The pupils are encouraged and supported in evaluating regularly their own learning, and that of their peers; in the best practice, their responses are used well by teachers to plan further for learning. The planning for literacy ensures breadth and balance and the primary department have well established practice in using data very effectively to inform future planning and to track pupil progress. Notable features in KS3 are the daily literacy and numeracy lessons to ensure consolidation of key skills.
- The provision for literacy was highly effective in most of the lessons observed and pupils benefit from well planned opportunities to develop their reading, writing and talking and listening skills, both in discrete literacy lessons and across the curriculum. This provision is supported well by the effective use of ICT and liaison between the speech and language therapist and the teachers. The school has a literacy-rich, stimulating environment which celebrates the pupils' work. The provision for mathematics is effective and, within the majority of lessons observed, there is clear planning to meet the individual needs of the pupils with appropriate academic targets and strategies in place. The lessons are enhanced by the good use of practical resources and, in a majority of lessons, the effective use of the interactive white board. To develop the provision further, the school have identified the need to put in place a more comprehensive baseline assessment system for KS3, and to record achievement more effectively and to identify early individual support required.
- The curriculum for senior pupils and leavers is very well designed to prepare them for transition to post-school placements in further education, training agencies and employment. The staff have developed effective arrangements for careers education and have established and maintain valuable links with the local area learning community, and a wide range of employers who provide suitable work experience opportunities.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care within the school is outstanding. There is a clear inclusive and nurturing ethos which permeates all aspects of the school in which all pupils and staff are valued. The staff are highly committed to the welfare of the pupils and promote high standards of behaviour and work. The pupils respond enthusiastically to the well developed structures which actively promote and reward positive and appropriate behaviour. The pastoral support provided by the school is appropriately responsive to the needs of individual learners, addressing personal and contemporary issues which affect their lives. The school is developing additional links with parents through a well conceived 'Family Learning' programme. During meetings with the inspectors

the pupils were articulate and showed great pride in their school. They spoke about the subjects they enjoy and the progress they make in their learning; they also spoke with confidence about their plans for continuing their learning and gaining employment. They reported that they have very good opportunities to make decisions about their school through, for example, the school council.

- The school promotes healthy breaks, including a selection of fruit, and provides regular opportunities for the pupils to engage in energetic, physical activity thereby encouraging them to adopt healthy lifestyles.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding pupils. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. During the inspection, the inspectors met with two separate groups of pupils. In discussions, the pupils stated that they feel safe and cared for in school and are aware of what to do if they have any worries about their safety or well-being.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The principal and vice-principal form a very effective and experienced senior management team; they have developed a clear, strategic vision for the school that has been shared and agreed with staff, parents and governors. They have re-organised effectively the leadership and middle management teams and roles following recent retirements and a significant number of recent staff absences, ensuring little disruption for the pupils.
- The recently formed curriculum teams are at differing stages of development, particularly in the monitoring and support of classroom practice; all have appropriate action plans in place. Approximately half of the co-ordinators have developed effective curriculum content tracking systems for their areas of responsibility; these systems should be extended throughout the school to support further teachers and co-ordinators in their work.
- The culture of self evaluation to effectively monitor and evaluate teaching and learning is well established and effective for the experienced staff; further development is required for those at the beginning of their teaching careers and for temporary staff.
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the parents, staff and school community can have a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated; the board of governors have a very effective working partnership with the principal and school staff. They join regularly school curriculum team meetings and provide excellent support and challenge for the school.

## **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 pupils; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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