

Education and Training Inspectorate PRIMARY INSPECTION



Belmont Primary School, Belfast

Controlled, co-educational DE Ref No: 101-0012

Report of an Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in
October 2019



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
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INTRODUCTION

1. Context

Belmont Primary School is a controlled primary school situated on the Belmont Road in East Belfast. Almost all of the children come from the surrounding area. The school comprises of children in years 1 to 3; nearly all of whom transfer to a local controlled primary school for years 4 to 7. The school participates successfully in the Eco-Schools Green Flag Award and has achieved six awards in recent years.

The trade unions which make up the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) have declared industrial action primarily in relation to a pay dispute, and also workload and other management issues. The industrial action includes non-co-operation with the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). Prior to the inspection, the school informed the ETI that a minority of the teachers would be co-operating with the inspection. The senior leadership and a majority of the middle leaders co-operated with the inspection team in relation to their leadership and safeguarding responsibilities. The ETI has a statutory duty to monitor, inspect and report on the quality of education under Article 102 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. Therefore, the inspection proceeded and the following evaluations are based on the evidence as made available at the time of the inspection.

Belmont Primary School	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Enrolment	254	255	252	252
% School attendance	97.2	96.6	97.5	N/A
% NI Primary school average	95.5	94.9	N/A	N/A
FSME Percentage ¹	8.3	10.6	6.7	7.9
No. of children on SEN register	41	48	53	47
% of children on SEN register	16.1	18.8	21.0	18.6
No. of children with statements of educational need	*	*	*	*
No. of newcomer children	*	*	0	0

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

N/A not available

2. Parents' and staff questionnaire responses

Approximately twenty-three percent of parents, and sixty-six percent of staff, responded to the confidential, online questionnaires. Most of the parental responses indicated high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school and commented on, in particular, the high quality child-centred ethos created by the staff and leadership. Almost all of the staff responses were highly positive and endorsed the very good working relationships within the school and the impact of improvement on the children's learning.

The ETI has communicated to the principal and the chair of the board of governors the main findings and any individual issues arising from the questionnaires.

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

3. Focus of the inspection

The ETI was unable to evaluate:

- outcomes for children with a particular focus on numeracy and literacy;
- quality of provision with a particular focus on numeracy and literacy including across the curriculum; and
- quality of leadership and management.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Unable to assure the quality of education
Outcomes for learners	No performance level available
Quality of provision	No performance level available
Leadership and management	No performance level available

KEY FINDINGS

5. Outcomes for learners

- During the inspection, a group of year 3 children discussed with confidence their favourite fiction and non-fiction books and authors. The children read with fluency, appropriate intonation and with an understanding of characterisation and plot. The samples of work in books and electronic devices are of a very high standard. The children write independently across a range of genres and forms.
- The small number of year 3 children who met with the inspectors have a positive attitude to, and enjoyment of, the wide range of mathematical learning opportunities in which they engage. They have a very good understanding of key concepts across the areas of mathematics, are flexible in their thinking and employ a wide range of mathematical strategies to complete mental calculations. The children's books are presented to a very high standard, reflect the wide range of practical and activity-based tasks across all mathematical concepts and indicate clear progression through the year groups.
- Based on the school's qualitative and quantitative data, most of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make expected or better progress in literacy and numeracy.
- During the range of discussions with groups of year 3 children, and the opportunities to speak with children in the classroom, they show mutual respect; listen actively to and consider the views of their peers; and, work well collaboratively. Through the eco-committee, the children have opportunities to develop their leadership roles, their sense of collective responsibility and understand the contribution they make to school life. The development of these skills leads to a mature, positive approach to learning by the children.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the learning outcomes for the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning;

- progression in the children's learning; and
- the children's wider skills and dispositions.

6. Quality of provision

- In the small number of lessons observed, the quality of learning and teaching was very good. The lessons were characterised by open-ended questions, appropriately challenging learning opportunities that matched the individual needs of the children and effective plenary sessions.
- The children experience a well-balanced and progressive curriculum across literacy and numeracy. There is a high priority given to the development of talking and listening, reading and writing, mental mathematics and problem-solving.
- The school's programme of support for the children who require additional help with aspects of their learning is holistic and comprehensive. The individual education plans provide relevant and measurable targets for the development of the children's literacy, numeracy and social skills.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the quality of provision for learning;
- the quality of the curriculum;
- the effectiveness of the guidance and support in bringing about high quality individual learning experiences;
- the effectiveness and impact of planning, teaching, learning and assessment in promoting successful learning; and
- care and welfare.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership of the school has a clear strategic vision for school improvement; there is an effective, collaborative approach to self-evaluation. The comprehensive school development plan has been informed by consultation with the wider school community, and is based on robust, well-established monitoring and evaluation processes. The associated action plans reflect the school's current priorities in learning and teaching.
- The board of governors use effectively their expertise and range of complementary skills from education, finance and industry to support and challenge robustly the management of the school. They are informed regularly by the principal about the pastoral well-being of the children and staff, the outcomes for learners and the quality of provision. The governors monitor and evaluate rigorously the fiscal resources of the school and are engaging with external agencies to deliver on the planned outcomes for the children.

- The school works closely with three local primary schools to share good practice, to develop teacher professional learning and to ensure the smooth transition of the children to year 4. There are positive links with the parents who are well informed about their children's progress and the life and work of the school through, for example, curriculum workshops, newsletters and the website.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the impact of actions to promote improvement;
- the effectiveness of strategic leadership and governance;
- the effectiveness and impact of middle leadership; and
- the effectiveness of action to promote and sustain improvement.

8. Safeguarding

- During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education. The children report that they feel safe in the school and that they are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or welfare.

9. Overall effectiveness

Owing to the impact of the action short of strike being taken by the staff, the ETI is unable to assure parents/carers, the wider school community and stakeholders of the quality of education being provided for the children. This will be reflected in future inspection activity.

Health and safety/Accommodation

During inspection, the following health and safety matter was observed:

- a section of the perimeter fence of the playground does not ensure the safety of the children.

The school needs to take mitigating action.

Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the ETI website: [The Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework \(ISEF\): Effective Practice and Self-Evaluation Questions for Primary | Education Training Inspectorate](#)

Inspectors observe learning and teaching, scrutinise documentation and the children's written work and hold formal and informal discussions with children, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for inspection include:

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

Where, owing to the action short of strike, this evidence base was not available, it has been referenced in the body of the inspection report.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

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

Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

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 ETI use the following performance levels when reporting on outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management²:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on governance:

High degree of confidence
Confidence
Limited confidence

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on safeguarding:

Reflects the guidance
Reflects broadly the guidance
Unsatisfactory

The ETI use the following levels when reporting on care and welfare:

Impacts positively on learning, teaching and outcomes for learners.
Does not impacts positively enough on learning, teaching and outcomes for learners.

² And the overall provision in a unit, as applicable.

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the school:

The school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection in 12 to 18 months.
The school needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection in 18 to 24 months.

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