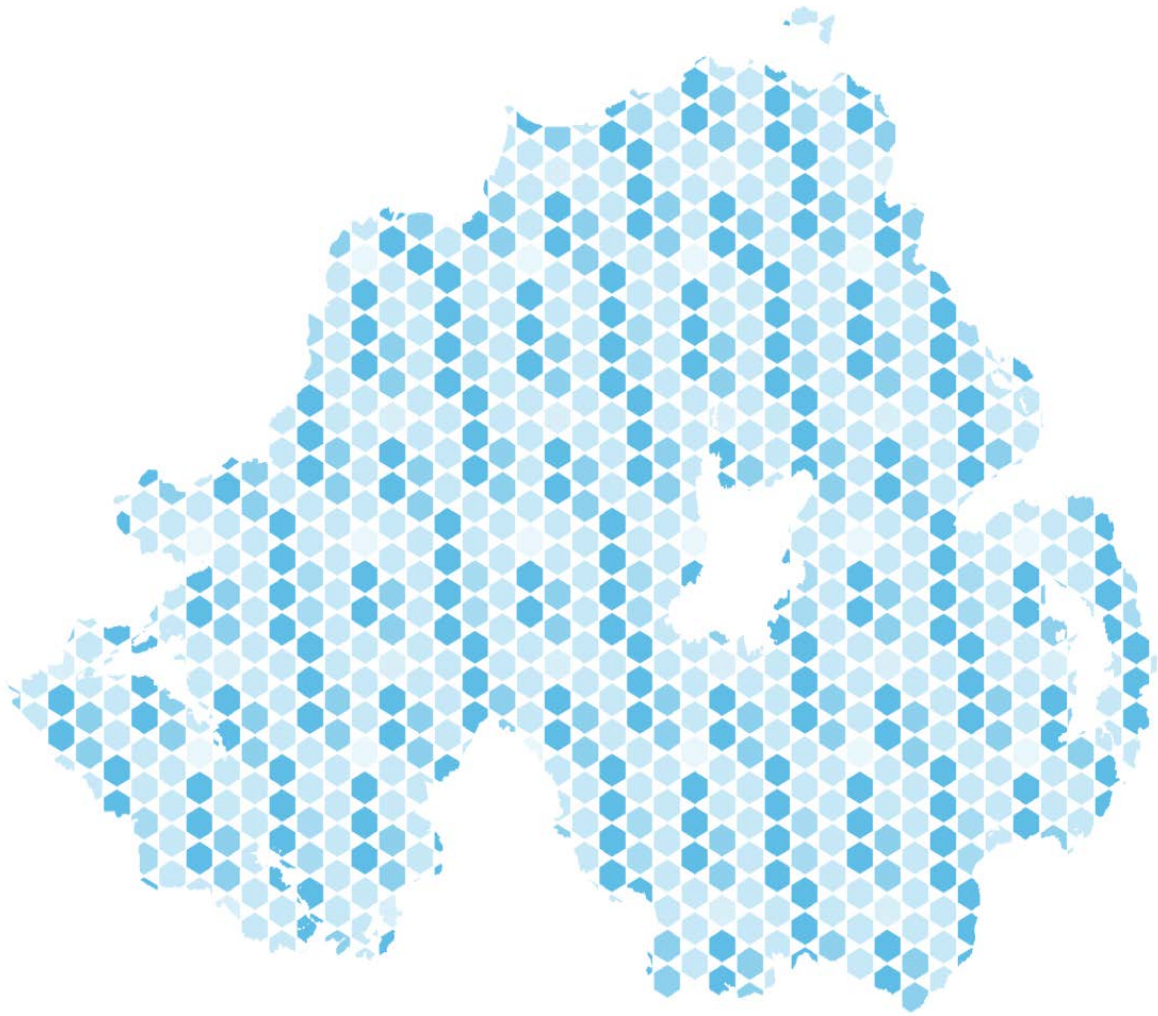


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Bride's Primary School and
Nursery Unit, Belfast

Maintained, co-educational

Report of an Inspection (Involving
Action Short of Strike) in
May 2017

eti

The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
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INTRODUCTION

1. Context

St Bride's Primary School and Nursery Unit, one of the largest maintained primary schools in Northern Ireland, occupies two sites in South Belfast. The past three years have seen a steady increase in the number of newcomer children. Almost all of the children come from the Parish of St Brigid's.

Four of the teaching unions which make up the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council have declared industrial action primarily in relation to a pay dispute. This includes non-co-operation with the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). Prior to the inspection, the school informed the ETI that a significant minority of the teachers would not be co-operating with the inspectors. 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 limited evaluations are based on the evidence as made available at the time of the inspection.

St Bride's Primary School	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Enrolment	872	878	874	874
% School attendance	96.7	97	97	N/A
% NI Primary school average	95.6	95.4	N/A	N/A
FSME Percentage ¹	11	12	12	13
No. of children on SEN register	115	106	99	103
% of children on SEN register	13	12	11	12
No. of children with statements of educational need	20	21	16	19
No. of newcomer children	107	132	143	153

Source: data as held by the school.

N/A not available

2. Views of parents and staff

Seventeen percent of parents in the school and nursery unit and just under half of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaires. The responses to the parental questionnaire indicated high levels of satisfaction with almost all aspects of the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents welcomed recent improvements to the provision and commented very positively on the leadership of the principal, the commitment of the staff, and on their children's progress and enjoyment of school. A significant minority of parents raised concerns in relation to aspects of communication, including information they receive about their child's progress. These and other individual issues have been reported to the principal and representatives of the board of governors. The staff responses were very positive; they emphasised the sense of teamwork and the collegial, child-centred approach to school improvement.

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

3. Focus of the inspection

The ETI was able to evaluate the quality of provision in the nursery unit.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully the:

- outcomes for children with a particular focus on numeracy and literacy including across the curriculum and how the school is addressing low attainment and underachievement where applicable;
- quality of provision in the school, with a particular focus on numeracy and literacy including across the curriculum; and
- quality of leadership and management.

Where it has been possible to evaluate aspects of these foci, they are reported below.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Unable to assure of 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
Nursery unit	Very good

KEY FINDINGS

5. Outcomes for learners

- The children attain high standards in literacy and numeracy. Across the curriculum, they speak with confidence and maturity using an appropriate vocabulary. From the foundation stage, the children write with increasing accuracy and independence; and, by the end of key stage (KS) 2, they produce an extensive range of writing that is of very high quality and in a variety of forms. By year 7, the most able children have developed regular reading behaviours and are discerning in their choice of writers. They express a secure understanding of plot and language and read with fluency. In mathematics, the children work independently and with others to acquire core mathematical concepts and skills which they apply successfully across the curriculum. In the foundation stage, the children engage enthusiastically with practical tasks involving number bonds, shape and space, and measures, to work quickly and accurately in problem solving. By the end of KS 2, the most able children are very flexible in mental calculations, and they are confident and competent in using their mathematical knowledge and thinking skills when attempting unfamiliar problems and investigations.
- The children settle quickly to work and they display positive attitudes and dispositions to collaborative learning. They organise and present their work neatly and take pride in their achievements. The children carry out roles and responsibilities with maturity, and during paired and group work, their interactions with one another are respectful and supportive. The children enjoy using information and communication technology (ICT) for a variety of purposes and audiences across the curriculum.

- The children in the school and nursery unit who require additional support with aspects of their learning and development, including those who are newcomers, make very good progress against the targets set and achieve well.
- The children in the nursery settle quickly to purposeful play. They have very good levels of independence and access readily the resources they need to develop further their play. The children are secure in the routines by taking on helper roles and self-regulating their selection of food at snack time. They have very good attention and listening skills and participate enthusiastically during the group sessions and stories. The children are beginning to understand and use a wide range of expressive language and vocabulary. They are beginning to use early mathematical language appropriately during their play; particularly that related to positional language, shapes and counting. During the outdoor play sessions, the children are confident in climbing and balancing and are challenged to experiment with their confidence levels through such learning experiences. They have a good interest in the World Around Us and enjoy investigating the wide range of natural resources provided.

The ETI was unable to evaluate:

- the outcomes for children in just over half of the classes.

6. Quality of provision

- In almost all of the lessons observed, the quality of learning and teaching was good or better; in just over one-third of the lessons, it was very good. Features of the highly effective practice include: effective questioning; plenary sessions which develop and expand the children's thinking and responses; and, work set in meaningful contexts and matched well to the children's abilities. The planning and provision for play-based learning in the foundation stage is, however, underdeveloped and does not build effectively enough on the children's learning experiences in the nursery unit.
- The planning for literacy and numeracy is broad and progressive and ensures that they are both integrated across the curriculum. In the literacy lessons observed, the children experience a good range of high quality fiction and non-fiction texts and the structured approach to the teaching of spelling and reading skills is raising further the standards attained by the children in these areas. In the numeracy lessons observed, practical resources, group work and active learning strategies are used skilfully by the teachers to sustain the children's mathematical curiosity and consolidate their learning. High quality talking and listening opportunities enable the children to explain the mathematical reasoning behind their answers.
- The children who have additional learning and development needs are identified at an early stage; they benefit well from the high quality in-class and withdrawal support provided by the teachers and the skilled classroom assistants.

- The nursery staff provide an attractive and stimulating learning environment. The staff engagement with the children is of a consistently high standard; effective use of questioning develops well the children's thinking and problem-solving skills. They develop skilfully the children's natural curiosity by modelling mathematical language and introducing new key vocabulary as part of the daily routines and play experiences. There is very good provision across all areas of the pre-school curriculum and the well-resourced outdoor play provision is a key strength. The transitions between learning areas and the daily routines are smooth, unobtrusive and support effectively the children's independence. The staff make regular observations of the children's learning and are currently trialling the use of a digital application to record observations of learning and to share them with the parents. The current systems for recording the observations of the children's learning and using them to inform the planning for future learning are limited.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school's approach to the care and welfare of the children impacts positively on learning, teaching and outcomes. The inclusive ethos supports the children's learning and develops well their personal and social skills.

The ETI was unable to evaluate:

- the quality of provision for learning in just over half of the classes.

7. Leadership and management

- Leadership and management have a clear vision for the holistic development of every child and for maintaining the highest possible standards for all. The senior leadership team is committed to building the capacity of all staff through a well-planned programme for staff development. As a result, there is an effective collegial approach to school improvement. The middle managers have a good understanding of their role within the school improvement process and have identified appropriate priorities for development within their areas of responsibility. The teachers use appropriately a range of qualitative and quantitative data to track the children's progress and to set targets at individual and class level.
- The school development planning process is informed by meaningful consultation with all stakeholders. The school development plan is comprehensive and the associated action plans set out appropriate areas for improvement. The monitoring and evaluation of the school's progress in meeting the targets does not focus sufficiently on the impact of the actions to promote improvement on the quality of the provision and the outcomes achieved by the children.
- The leadership and management have identified links with parents as a priority for further development. A range of initiatives have been put in place to improve the communication between the school and parents; these were acknowledged positively within a number of the parental responses to the ETI questionnaire. The school works closely with two post primary schools to share good practice and support the effective transition of children as they move to the next stage of their education.

- Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, the ETI evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are very supportive of the school and are committed to developing further their capacity and role in the school improvement process. The governors need to provide an annual report to parents in order to comply with statutory regulations.
- During the inspection, the school provided evidence that satisfactory arrangements for safeguarding children reflect broadly the guidance issued by the Department of Education. However, the following areas need to be addressed:
 - the positive behaviour and anti-bullying policies need to be adapted to reflect practice in the nursery unit; and
 - the draft E-safety policy needs to be ratified by the governors.

In discussion with the inspectors, a group of children from year 6 reported that they feel safe and secure in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their wellbeing. However, owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the outworking of the arrangements for safeguarding in the school.

The ETI was unable to evaluate:

- the impact of actions to promote improvement in just over half of the classes.

8. 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.

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 a representative(s) from the governors;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

During this inspection, the inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation and limited samples of the children's work in literacy, numeracy and ICT.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- meetings with the principal on the pre-inspection visit and during the inspection;
- a meeting with the designated teacher;
- meetings with staff with specific responsibilities;
- 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.

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

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.
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.

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

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