

EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
INSPECTORATE

## PRIMARY INSPECTION

Elmgrove Primary School, Belfast

DE Ref No 101-0255

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in June 2024



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# Follow-up to the inspection of Elmgrove Primary School, Belfast, BT5 4RS (101-0255)

## Introduction

Elmgrove Primary School and Nursery Unit is a controlled, co-educational primary school situated in East Belfast. Most of the children who attend the school come from the local area. A new school build is currently underway on a nearby site and the nursery unit is operating from mobile accommodation at the site of the new school building. The nursery unit is due to move to its new building in June 2024, with the remainder of the school moving to the new premises in November 2024.

This follow-up inspection was carried out in June 2024 and provided the school with the opportunity to demonstrate its progress in addressing the areas for action from the time of the last inspection in October 2016 and the monitoring visit in November 2021.

A Department of Education (DE) funded nurture room was established in 2021. The Education Authority (EA) approved two Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools (SPiMS) Learning classes in 2017 and two SPiMS Social Communication classes in 2022. There have been a number of changes at senior leadership level since November 2023, including the recent appointment of an acting principal and acting vice-principal.

## Views of parents, staff and pupils

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) issued online confidential questionnaires to parents, staff and the children in year 7 in advance of the follow-up inspection. A summary of the questionnaire responses, including any issues raised, was shared with the senior leaders and the chair of the board of governors.

Most (73) of the children in year 7 responded to the online questionnaire, with 18 of them providing additional written comments. Almost all of the children agreed that they are treated with care and respect and that staff help them when they find it difficult to learn. In the written responses, the children highlighted that they enjoy school and are appreciative of their kind teachers and their friends.

The inspectors also met with groups of children from years 4 to 7. They talked very positively about how their achievements are celebrated through, for example, the monthly kindness certificates and star awards. The children also talked about their successes, including their enjoyment of participating in the choir, sporting activities and competitions. They reported that they feel happy and safe in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.

Forty-five parents (9.7%) responded to the online questionnaire, with almost all agreeing that their child is happy at Elmgrove Primary School and most agreeing that their child is making good progress in their learning. There were twenty-three additional written comments in which the majority of parents indicated that they are positive about the life and work of the school.

Thirty-eight staff completed the confidential questionnaire. Almost all of the staff expressed that they are clear about the school's vision. A small number of staff (12) provided written comments, a majority of which highlighted the commitment of the staff to meeting the diverse needs and abilities of the children.

## Key actions

During this period, the key actions which affect the work of the school include the:

- acting principal and acting vice principal have been in post since mid-April 2024;
- practical oversight of the new school build by the acting principal, supported by the newly-formed Senior Leadership Team (SLT);
- engagement of staff in a range of externally-provided professional learning opportunities; and
- range of external support provided by the EA relating to leadership and management.

## Key findings

- A caring, friendly, and supportive ethos is evident throughout the school. The children are respectful of each other and the adults. They are very welcoming of, and engage easily with, visitors and their behaviour is exemplary. The school's effective implementation of nurturing principles and restorative practices which help the children to create and maintain healthy relationships and resolve amicably any disagreements is impacting positively on: the children's well-being; their ability to understand and manage their emotions; and, their readiness to learn.
- The children from years 4 to 7 who met with inspectors spoke positively about the range of opportunities they have to take on leadership roles and contribute to the life and work of the school through, for example, the school council and school prefect system. They are immensely proud of their school and enjoy a range of opportunities to participate in, for example, the school fair, school trips, and in the end of year 7 musical theatre production.
- The school motto is to 'have the courage to do what you know is right'. This is evidenced by the mature and reflective responses from the members of the school council and the year 6 children. In discussion with inspectors, they commented positively on the fairness of the school rules in, for example, keeping the children safe in the playground, and in advocating for equal opportunities in sport for all. The year 7 children actively encourage each other during the regular rehearsals for their end of year musical theatre production. The children report they enjoy project-based learning and would welcome more opportunities to be active in their learning and for learning to be set in real-life contexts to increase their enjoyment of learning and enable them to see the purpose in and relevance of their learning.

- The staff are conscientious and committed to improving the provision and outcomes for all children. Most of the lessons observed were effective in meeting the wide range of learning needs within the classroom through the provision of tailored support for the children by all staff. A key action for the newly-formed SLT will be to work collegially with the staff to identify, disseminate and embed best practice in both the planning for learning and the learning and teaching across the school, to continue to improve the provision for the children.
- Through careful analysis of whole-school assessment information, the curricular teams have identified appropriate areas to develop in both numeracy and literacy, and the need to monitor and evaluate more robustly the impact of this improvement work. The governors and staff have identified the need to make more effective use of the wide range of pastoral and academic information they have in order to monitor better the children's progress from their individual starting points. This work will support the governors and staff in achieving the school's vision which is to maximise each child's potential.
- The outcomes achieved by the children in literacy are improving. Ongoing development work, focused on progressing the children's comprehension skills through guided and reciprocal reading, is beginning to impact positively on the children's attitudes towards and enjoyment in reading. Some of the children who spoke with inspectors expressed their enjoyment of writing stories. A review of samples of the children's work and the teachers' planning indicates that the children would benefit from increased opportunities to write across a range of genres and to use a wider range of forms.
- The school's current approach to the teaching of numeracy is reliant heavily on the use of a wide range of online mathematics programmes, educational websites and commercially produced schemes. The children currently do not have enough opportunities to use practical resources which they can handle and manipulate to help them to understand basic mathematics operations and develop their mathematical thinking and reasoning. The numeracy team plan to work with the staff to develop the long-term planning and ensure there is a clear and shared understanding of progression in mathematics and numeracy across the school, which this follow-up inspection endorses.
- The board of governors is involved actively in the life and work of the school. The governors who met with inspectors have a clear understanding of the current challenges facing the school and have identified the appropriate actions required to bring about further school improvement.

## Child Protection

At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the school demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance.

## Going Forward


Elmgrove Primary School provides a safe and nurturing environment where the staff are committed to supporting the children and their families. The inspection has highlighted some areas for further action. ETI will monitor the progress of Elmgrove Primary School in addressing the areas for further action relating to planning for learning, learning and teaching, and self-evaluation detailed in the report.

There will be a further follow-up inspection.

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