

EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE

PRIMARY INSPECTION

The Model Primary School and Nursery Unit,
Londonderry

Controlled, co-educational
DE Ref No (201-0380)

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in June 2022



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Department of Education
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Follow-up to the inspection of The Model Primary School and Nursery Unit, Londonderry, BT48 7HJ (201-0380)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a follow-up inspection of The Model Primary School and Nursery Unit in October 2017¹. Owing to action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the impact of actions taken and the extent to which the significant areas for improvement have been addressed, namely to:

- improve the effectiveness of the strategic leadership at all levels in the school and nursery unit, including the capacity to self-evaluate robustly and to develop further the school development planning process;
- improve the quality of the planning to ensure the needs of all of the children are met effectively to improve the outcomes they achieve; and
- improve the quality of the provision in the nursery unit.

Consequently, there remained a need for the Model Primary School and nursery unit to address the important areas for improvement.

The school's development plan and associated action plans were adjusted in light of the inspection findings and the feedback given by ETI.

ETI carried out a monitoring visit in October 2021 and a second follow-up inspection in June 2022.

In the interval since the initial inspection, the school has received external support from the Education Authority (EA) in relation to: strategic leadership and management, including governance; and school development planning relating to whole-school improvement.

Over the same period, the key actions or changes which affect the work of the school include:

- the appointment of a new principal and vice-principal, and a review of middle and senior leadership roles;
- the establishment of curriculum clusters, and the appointment of three new co-ordinators;
- a significant review and revision of the whole-school development planning and planning for learning processes;
- staff access to a range of relevant professional learning;

¹ [Londonderry Model Primary School Follow-up Inspection October 2017](#)

- a significant increase in the number of children with a statement of educational need, from 22 in 2016 to 33 in 2022;
- a significant increase in the number of newcomer children, from 12 in 2016 to 37 in 2022; and
- significant improvements to the school building, including a second nurture room, a sensory room, a new information and communication technology (ICT) suite and outdoor learning areas.

As a consequence of the external support and the key changes and actions taken within the school, there have been significant improvements in the quality of education as reported in the key findings below.

Key findings

The outcomes for learners have improved and are now very good.

The children are highly motivated and engage enthusiastically in their learning activities; and, their behaviour is excellent. They are very proud of their diverse and inclusive school ethos; and, the year 6 children who met with the inspectors, talked positively about the changes brought about by the school- and eco-councils and their active role in, and contribution to, the school development planning process. The children from year 7, who met with the inspectors, read with fluency and expression and justified opinions about their favourite authors, characters and the books they have read. They spoke positively about how the range of reading strategies developed by their teachers has encouraged them to develop further their reading and literacy skills. The year 7 children's knowledge of the key mathematical concepts is very good; and, they apply effectively their mathematical reasoning skills and processes to real-life situations.

There is clear and appropriate progression in the children's knowledge and understanding from the nursery unit to year 7 as evident in the very good standards overall in the children's books. By the end of key stage (KS) 2, the quality of the children's writing is well-developed and is presented to a high standard. The children extend their knowledge and understanding of problem-solving and mathematical investigations through a range of online apps and commercial resources to very good effect. The children's creativity and imaginative work is celebrated across the school, including the nursery unit, in attractive classroom and corridor displays.

The children in the nursery unit respond well to the wide range of learning opportunities presented which support their sustained creative, imaginative and investigative play. They choose independently from the extensive range of natural and authentic resources and develop further their curiosity and exploration of the outdoor play area, with many of them showing a keen interest in the care of living things. The children respond enthusiastically to music and movement and storytelling sessions.

The quality of provision has improved and is now very good.

There have been significant improvements in the teachers' planning and evaluations of learning with a focus on progression and challenge across the curriculum and key stages. The quality of learning and teaching observed was consistently good with a majority of lessons being very good or better, across all key stages. In the highly effective practice, the children: engage actively with their learning; display very good levels of independence, confidence and understanding of their work; work collaboratively by showing mutual respect to their peers and the staff; and, respond well to questioning which supports and enhances their learning.

The staff have developed effectively the 'voice of the child' and the children's valued contribution to the school improvement process. The children participate in focus group discussions about all curricular areas and whole-school improvement; assume a range of leadership roles through, for example, the school council which has been instrumental in achieving the Bronze Fairtrade Award². They contribute to the school's success in achieving the Bronze Sustrans Award³ and the School of Sanctuary status⁴. The wide range of pastoral and personal development programmes impact positively on the children's social skills, develops their empathy for others and emotional health and wellbeing. In discussions with the inspectors, the children from year 6 report that they feel safe in school and know what to do and who to go to if they have any concerns about their safety or wellbeing.

The quality of provision in the nursery unit has improved and is now very good. The quality of learning and teaching observed in the nursery unit is now very good; the adults engage actively in the play; use open-ended questions to support and extend the learning, listen to the children and respond to their interests and ideas. The playroom and outdoor areas are well organised and attractively presented to allow children to access freely the wide range of resources. The long- and short-term planning have been reviewed, include learning opportunities which support progression and reflect clearly the pre-school curriculum and the interests of the children. Evaluations are detailed and, together with the extensive incidental and planned observations, record the children's attainment and inform future planning. Staff seek proactively external speech and language support for children, employ a screening tool to identify specific needs and promote the use of the Department of Education (DE) Getting Ready to Learn⁵ material to encourage the further development of language.

The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and action to promote improvement have improved and are now very good.

² Fairtrade School means joining a worldwide movement where young people learn that they have the power to make a difference in the world.

³ SUSTRANS: Sustainable Transport – a programme which encourages children and parents to walk and cycle to school, where safe and practicable.

⁴ The School of Sanctuary award is aimed at helping schools to develop further and celebrate their cultural diversity.

⁵ The DE Getting Ready to Learn project supports pre-school education providers to encourage and develop parental involvement in their child's early learning.

There has been clear strategic direction and focus on improvement over the last four years, and, as a result, the senior leaders have embedded a consistent and collegial approach to whole-school development planning. There is now an effective self-evaluation and action planning process which evaluates the impact of the quality of planning on learning and teaching: curricular co-ordinators meet regularly with all teachers to discuss targets, monitor and evaluate progress and use a wide range of evidence to measure the impact of progress. Effective links are embedded between the nursery unit and the foundation stage teachers to ensure the progression and continuity of learning. The staff benefit from and engage regularly in local early years clusters where ideas and expertise are shared.

The governors are actively involved in the life and the work of the school. They are exercising appropriately their challenge and support function, and meet regularly with middle and senior leaders to monitor and review school improvement. They use first-hand evidence to make informed decisions about what meets best the needs of the whole- school community.

Capacity to bring about improvement has been built at all levels of leadership throughout the school, including the governors, and as a result, the EA support has been notably tapered and replaced by the school's own effective programme of continuous professional development. The staff are afforded appropriate time for professional learning and are supported well to disseminate effective practice, which is having a positive impact across the curricular and pastoral areas of school improvement.

Overall effectiveness

The Model Primary School and Nursery Unit now has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interests of all the learners. The ETI will continue to monitor how the school sustains improvement.

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