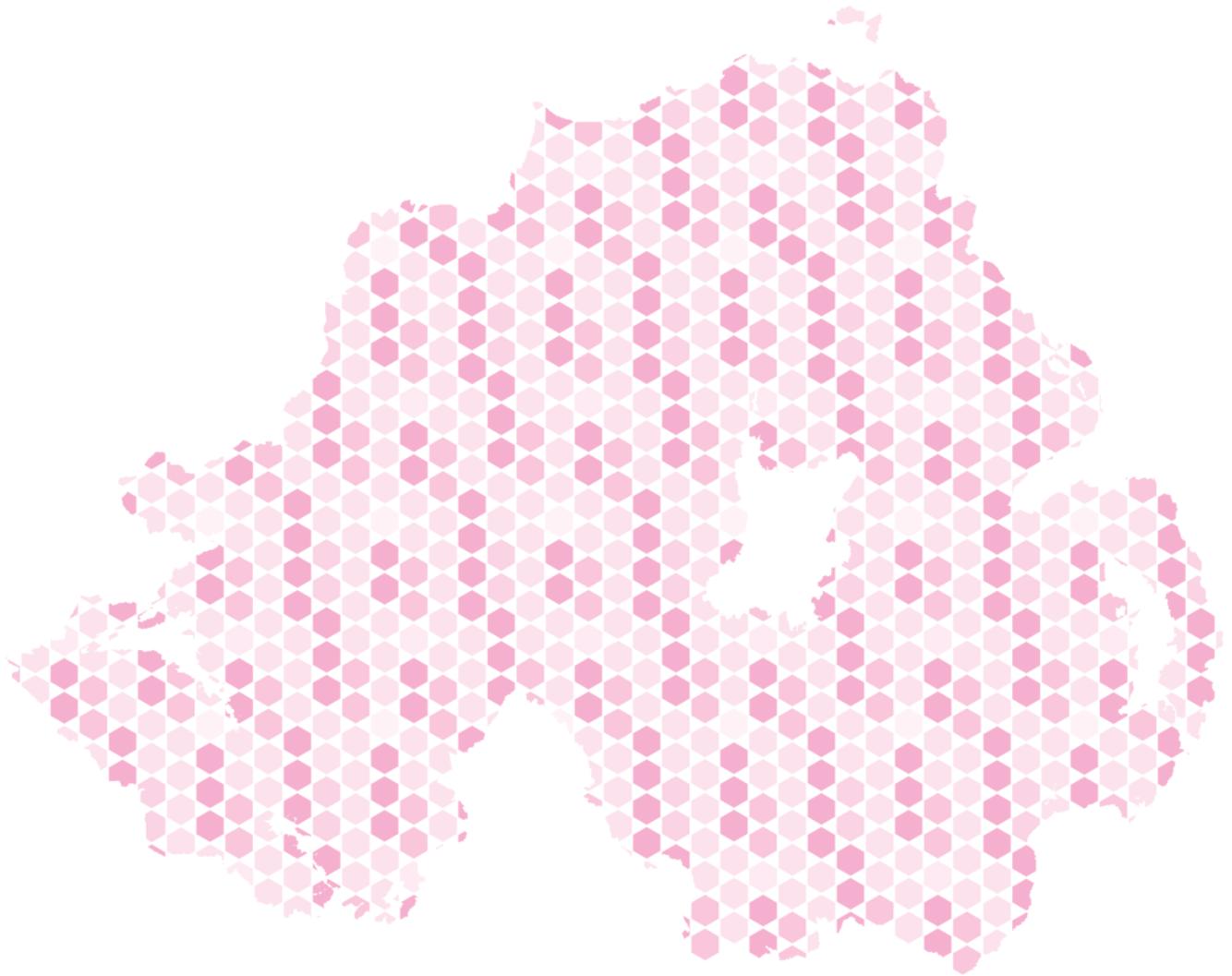


Education and Training Inspectorate INDEPENDENT SCHOOL INSPECTION



Bangor Independent Christian School, Bangor, County Down

DE Ref No (IS36)

Report of an Inspection in February 2019

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1. Context

Bangor Independent Christian School is situated on the Clandeboye Road, near Bangor, and has been providing education since 1985. The accommodation has recently been extended to include: a new reception area, with controlled access; an ICT suite; an art and design room; a store; and a grass-covered outdoor play area, with new play equipment. The accommodation meets health and safety standards. The school is administered by Bangor Free Presbyterian Church under the authority of the Presbytery Education Board of the Free Presbyterian Church. The current administrator has been in post since September 2017, following the retirement of the church's minister. The learners come from a wide catchment area in North Down and, over the last four years, enrolment has remained steady. The proportion of newcomers has increased significantly in the last year. The pupils are grouped in three composite classes. There is currently one primary class, one key stage (KS) 3 class and another for KS 4. At the time of the inspection, the learners from KS 4 were out of school on work shadowing placements.

Bangor Independent Christian School	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Enrolment	18	17	18	20
% Attendance – primary age pupils	95	97	97	N/A
% Attendance – post-primary age pupils	96	97	96	N/A
FSME Percentage ¹	28	35	22	25
Number of children on SEN register	*	*	*	*
No. of children with statements of educational needs	*	*	*	*
No. of newcomers	*	*	*	5

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

2. Focus of the inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the learners' achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy, in particular, how the school is addressing low attainment and under-achievement where applicable;
- whether the accommodation is suitable and meets health and safety standards;
- the quality of provision in the school, with a particular focus on the implementation of the procedures for safeguarding and pastoral care; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

3. Outcomes for learners

- The learners settle quickly to work and stay on task during their lessons. They engage readily in whole-class discussion and, when given the opportunity, express their views clearly. They are respectful and listen closely to their teachers and to their peers. From an early stage, the learners use ICT with confidence, making independent decisions about editing and presenting their work. They interact well with their peers and with adult visitors to the school.

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

- By the end of KS 2, the learners read fluently and use a range of strategies when they meet unfamiliar words. As they progress through the school, the learners read increasingly challenging classic literature and use analytical terms when discussing character, plot and literary effects. While the learners in the primary class develop accurate functional writing skills, their personal and creative expression will benefit from structured opportunities to write in a wider range of forms across their subjects. In their English lessons, the learners in KS 3 and KS 4 write competently for a variety of audiences and purposes.
- The learners enjoy their mathematics lessons, particularly when using practical equipment and when the learning is connected to everyday life. By the end of KS 2, they are able to apply processes and make accurate written calculations. The learners' confidence in using mental mathematics strategies and mathematical language is less well developed; increased opportunities to articulate their thinking and explain how they reached conclusions will support their progress in mental mathematics.
- According to the school's internal performance data, most of the learners are making progress in English and mathematics which is in line with their age and stage of development.
- Over the last three years, most of the learners attain five or more GCSEs, including English and mathematics, at grades A* to C. The standards attained by the small number of learners at this level are above the three-year Northern Ireland average for all types of schools. The learners' outcomes in the STEM-related² subjects are higher than in the literacy-based subjects. The school has recognised the need to aim for higher grades, especially in GCSE English language. While the timetable has been adjusted to provide more time for English language at KS 4, the teachers also need to review their approaches to literacy across the year groups and across the curriculum, with a view to helping the learners develop all the skills and subject knowledge required at GCSE.

4. Quality of provision

- In three-quarters of the lessons, learning and teaching were effective. In the best practice, the teachers' planning sets clear goals for learning and identifies suitable strategies, including practical and interactive activities, which deepen the children's understanding of complex concepts. Classroom management is efficient and is complemented by well-established routines. The teachers' enthusiasm engages the learners who are keen to answer questions and offer their own views.
- In a minority of the lessons, the tasks were not well enough matched to the learners' levels of ability and did not provide sufficient challenge. There were insufficient opportunities for the learners to work together and talk about their learning.

² STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

- While the curriculum at the foundation stage (FS) and KS 1 is generally balanced, the learners do not have sufficient planned opportunities to develop their communication and interpersonal skills through play. At KS 2 and KS 3, the curriculum is suitably broad. The curriculum at KS 4 is flexible and responsive to the learners' subject choices. For example, three new subjects have been introduced over the last two years. Most of the learners progress to level 3 courses in colleges of further education or in a local post-primary school.
- The learners benefit from shared sports events with another independent Christian school, active involvement in a school-based craft fair, visits to local nursing homes and participation in relevant church events. Ongoing links with local businesses facilitate relevant, meaningful work placements for the learners in years 11 and 12.
- The arrangements for care and welfare are effective. In all of the lessons observed, the relationships between the learners and the teachers are characterised by warmth, trust and mutual respect. The teachers provide sensitive individual support when appropriate.

5. Leadership and management

- The temporary administrator liaises well between the church committee and the principal. He is closely involved in the life of the school and often leads morning worship. As the church's designated person, he has a sound working knowledge of the arrangements for safeguarding the learners, notably regarding the security of the site and buildings.
- The principal and all of the experienced teaching staff hold third-level qualifications and work flexibly with both the primary and post-primary classes. They use their complementary interests and aptitudes to offer a flexible range of subjects.
- The school development plan articulates key aspects of the school's ethos and provision. The one-year overview identifies appropriate priorities for improvement, namely raising the standards attained by the learners in literacy and increasing their confidence in using mental mathematics.

6. Safeguarding

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding learners reflect broadly the guidance from the Presbytery Committee for the Protection of Children and the Department of Education.

While there are regular checks of the fire alarms, fire-fighting equipment and emergency lighting, a full fire-risk assessment has not been conducted on an annual basis. Following the inspection, the principal and the church committee arranged to have this assessment carried out and have undertaken to conduct it annually.

7. Conclusion

Bangor Independent Christian School provides efficient and suitable instruction for the learners³. The school should continue to be registered to provide education.

³ Education and Libraries Order (NI) 1986 Part IV 39 (1) c

Inspection guidance

The guide to inspection of independent schools is available at:

<https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/independent-schools-inspection-guidance>

Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

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%

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