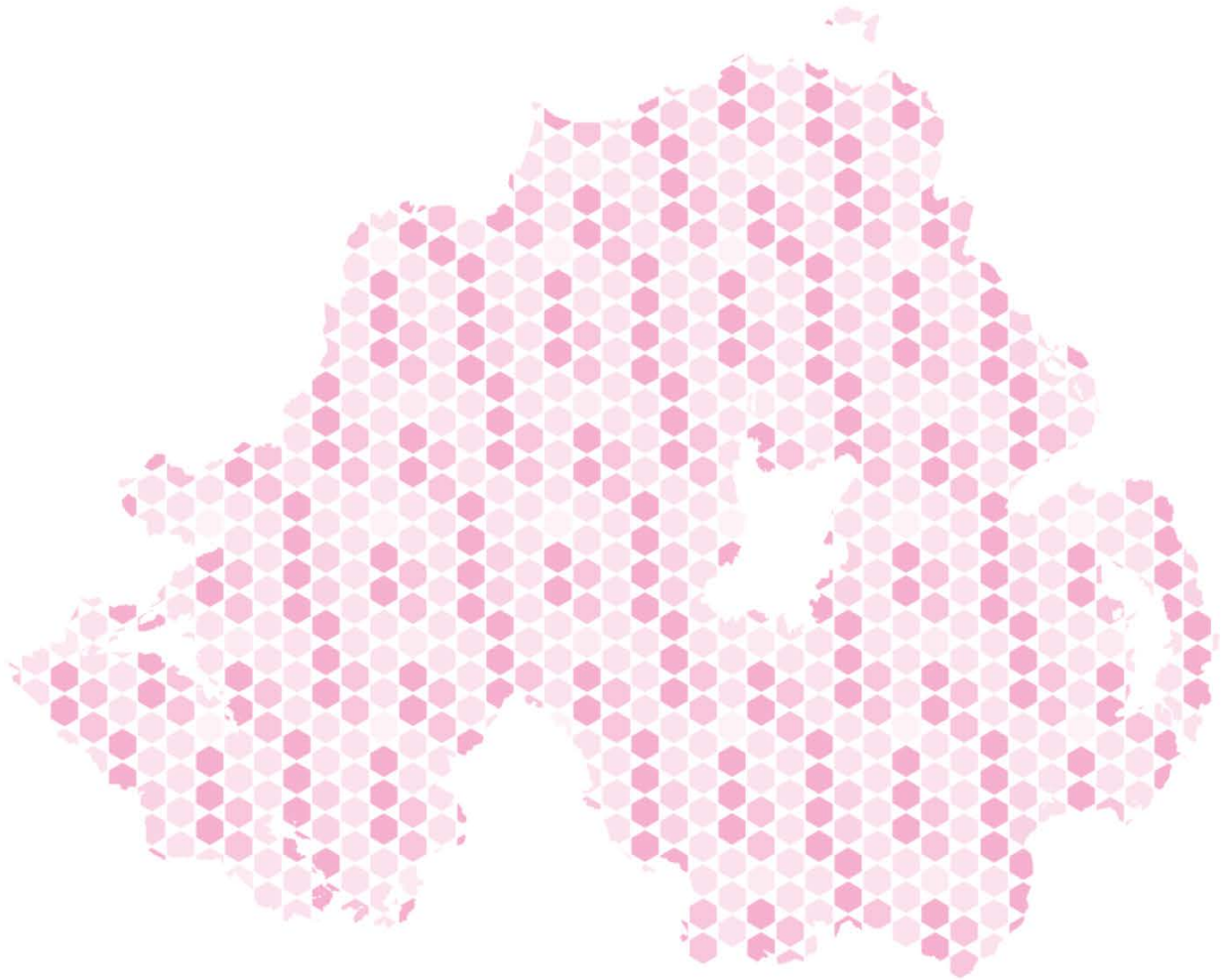


# Education and Training Inspectorate INDEPENDENT SCHOOL INSPECTION



Newtownabbey Independent Christian School, Glengormley,  
County Antrim

DE Ref No (IS34)

Report of an Inspection in January 2019

## Contents

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. Context	1
2. Focus of the inspection	1
3. Outcomes for learners	2
4. Quality of provision	3
5. Leadership and management	3
6. Safeguarding	4
7. Conclusion	4

### **Appendices**

- A. Health and safety/accommodation
- B. Inspection guidance
- C. Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

## 1. Context

Newtownabbey Independent Christian School is situated on the outskirts of Glengormley and has been providing education for 35 years. The accommodation generally meets Health and Safety standards. (See Appendix A) The school is administered by Newtownabbey Free Presbyterian Church under the authority of the Presbytery Education Board of the Free Presbyterian Church. The learners come from a wide catchment area, extending from Belfast to Ballymena. Over the last four years, enrolment has remained steady. The pupils are grouped in four composite classes by key stage (KS); there is currently one child of non-compulsory school age in the lower primary composite class, one pupil in KS 4 and no provision at post-16.

Newtownabbey Independent Christian School				
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Enrolment	34	39	39	34
% Attendance – primary age pupils	97.4	98.2	98	N/A
% Attendance – post-primary age pupils	95.3	97	95.7	N/A
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	5.9	15.4	15.4	17.6
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.

---

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

### 3. Outcomes for learners

- The children in the lower primary class make steady progress in developing their hand-writing skills and their written work is well presented. They read with increasing word recognition and phonological awareness, and can formulate accurate written responses to textbook activities.
- By the end of KS 2, most of the learners read fluently, but with limited expression. They report that they enjoy their reading, demonstrate a good understanding of their books and use appropriate strategies when they come across unfamiliar words. By KS 3 and 4, the learners write with accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Across the school, the learners have limited opportunities to discuss their work in pairs or small groups. As a result, the learners' oral communication skills are less well developed in the primary classes which the school attributes to the distinctive educational philosophy, teaching methodologies and ethos in the school.
- In the foundation stage (FS) and in KS 1, the children's books and assessments indicate that they make steady progress in numeracy. By the end of KS 2, the learners are confident in working through written calculations and articulate clearly how they arrive at solutions. However, they lack confidence in applying mental mathematics strategies and in using mathematical language. The children cover an appropriate range of mathematical processes as they progress through the school and apply their understanding across the curriculum. The learners in KS 3 and 4 attain good standards in mathematics.
- The school's internal performance data indicates that most of the learners are attaining standards in English and mathematics 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. While the number taking GCSE examinations is relatively small, the standards attained by the learners are consistently above the Northern Ireland average for all types of schools.
- Information provided by the school shows that, over the last four years, all of the leavers have progressed to level 3 courses in a range of schools and in the local college of further education, or to apprenticeships.
- The learners participate successfully in local shows, winning awards for their writing and practical skills. They use ICT confidently and enjoy their on-screen learning. In class, most of the learners settle quickly to their work and complete tasks independently. However, a minority lose focus during their lessons, when they are unclear about the teacher's expectations and how to progress to the next stage of their learning.

#### **4. Quality of provision**

- A majority of the lessons observed were effective and founded on the good working relationships between the teachers and the learners. In these lessons, the teachers build skilfully on the learners' prior knowledge and extend their thinking and learning. The teachers model subject-specific language and use questioning well to engage the learners and deepen their understanding.
- In one-third of the lessons observed, the learning environment, resources and teaching styles do not provide sufficient age-appropriate and differentiated activities to meet the needs of individual children and promote sustained self-motivated learning.
- From the FS to KS 3, the curriculum provides a suitably broad blend of STEM<sup>2</sup>-related subjects, humanities, the arts and physical education. At KS 4 it is sufficiently balanced to enable the learner to progress to the next stage of their education. The learners in the FS do not have planned opportunities to develop their communication and interpersonal skills through play.
- The learners benefit from musical links with the other independent Christian schools, participation in local sporting events, charitable fund-raising initiatives and opportunities for outdoor learning.
- The arrangements for the care and welfare of the learners are effective. There are supportive working relationships between the learners and the staff. The school's Christian ethos is shared by the parents who work co-operatively with the teachers to support the learners' progress.

#### **5. Leadership and management**

- Through the administrator's active involvement in the life and work of the school, he knows the learners well. He is regularly involved in morning worship and gives instruction during some practical lessons. The school leaders have a good understanding of the standards attained by the learners and their progression to the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- The management board meets regularly throughout the year and is kept informed about the life and work of the school through first-hand reports from the principal. The church's committee is responsible for all aspects of accommodation and takes a pro-active approach to health and safety.

---

<sup>2</sup> STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

- All of the teaching staff hold third-level qualifications. As trainee teachers gain practical experience in the school, they are supported in completing qualifications, mainly through correspondence degrees. Trainee teachers access annual training provided by the Presbytery Board. In order to address the less effective practice identified during the inspection, the ongoing professional development within school needs to be more sharply focused on building the teachers' capacity to plan for, and use, a wider range of effective strategies to meet the needs of all of the learners.

## **6. Safeguarding**

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding learners reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education. The school needs to:

- ensure that the staff are trained in and implement the enhanced arrangements for supervision in the outdoor areas.

## **7. Conclusion**

Newtownabbey Independent Christian School provides efficient and suitable instruction for the learners<sup>3</sup>. The school should continue to be registered to provide education.

---

<sup>3</sup> Education and Libraries Order (NI) 1986 Part IV 39 (1) c

**Health and safety/accommodation**

The Technology and Design room and equipment do not meet the current Department of Education for Northern Ireland buildings regulations.

**Inspection guidance**

The guide to inspection of independent schools is available at: [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%

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2019

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the [ETI website](#)