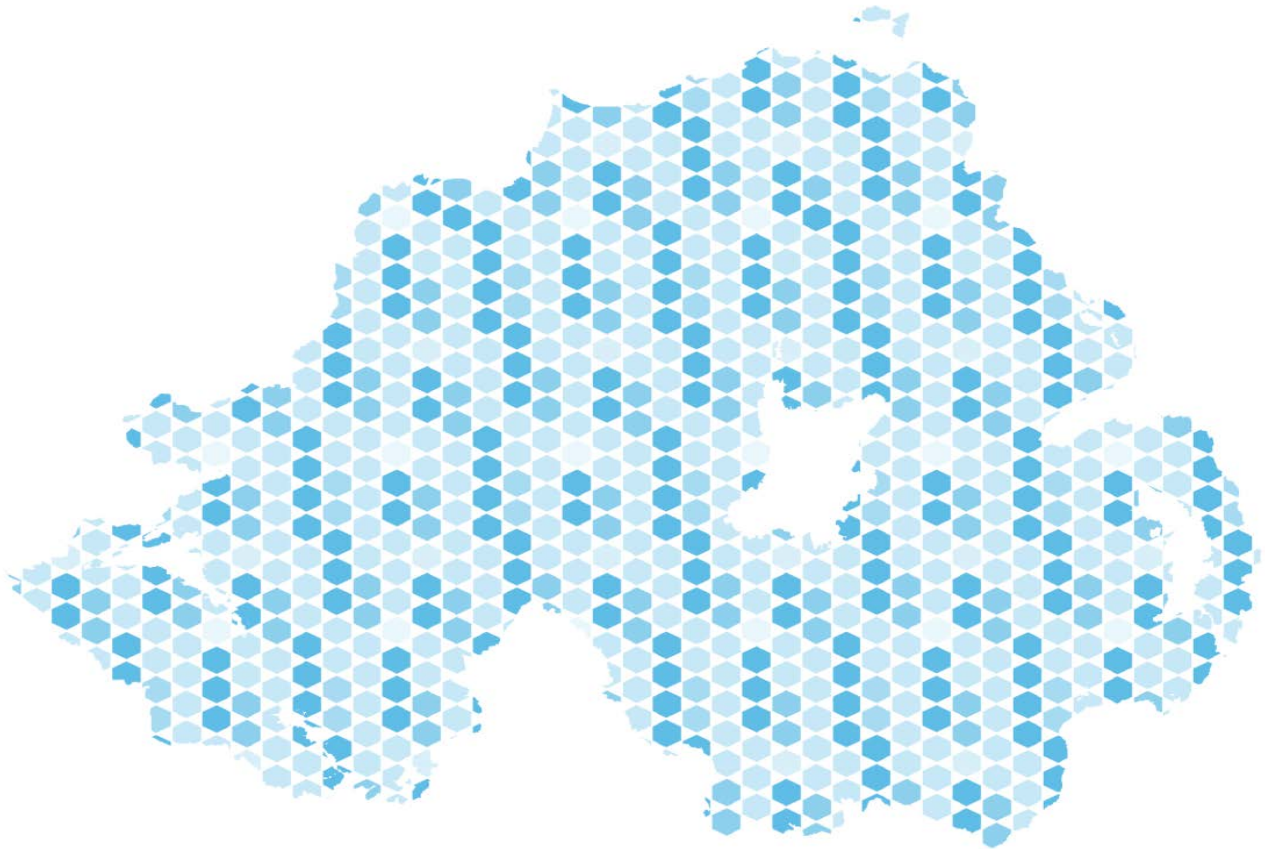


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Blythefield Primary School,
Belfast

Controlled, co-educational

Report of an Inspection in
February 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



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INTRODUCTION

1. Context

Blythefield Primary School is a controlled primary school situated in the inner-city district of Sandy Row in south Belfast in an area of high social deprivation. All of the children attending the school come from the surrounding area. The school's enrolment has increased by 40% over the past three years. Since the last inspection, there have been significant staffing changes including several appointments in leadership; the current acting principal has been in post for almost three years. During the inspection, there were temporary teachers in two of the five classes. The school completed recently an extensive refurbishment of an outdoor-shared learning classroom funded by the Department of Communities Urban Villages programme.

Blythefield Primary School	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Enrolment	87	77	90	108
% School attendance	91.2	88	90.9	93.2
% NI Primary school average	95.6	95.4	N/A	N/A
FSME Percentage ¹	87.6	88.3	80	87.03
No. of children on SEN register	43	41	35	45
% of children on SEN register	53.8	53.2	38.8	41.6
No. of children with statements of educational need	*	*	6	6
No. of newcomer children	*	*	12	10

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

N/A not available

2. Views of parents and staff

A small number of parents and 72% of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaires; no concerns or issues were raised. All of the responses to the parental questionnaire indicated high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. The responses from the staff endorsed the effective working relationships within the school, the inclusive welcoming ethos and the opportunities for professional development. The ETI has reported to the principal and the chair of the board of governors the main findings of the questionnaires.

3. Focus of the inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all children, the inspection linked internal and external approaches to evaluate the:

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

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

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Outcomes for learners	Good
Quality of provision	Good
Leadership and management	Very good

KEY FINDINGS

5. Outcomes for learners

The children achieve good outcomes in numeracy and mathematics. The children in the foundation stage have a good knowledge and understanding of key mathematical concepts. Across the key stages, the children set and monitor their own learning targets in numeracy and, in conjunction with the teachers, evaluate their progress in learning. They engage well in their numeracy lessons; the reward system throughout the school contributes to the children's enthusiasm and motivation and, they settle quickly to the planned learning activities. By year 7, the most able children have a good understanding of a range of mathematical concepts and are developing their confidence and vocabulary to explain their mathematical thinking and reasoning. In almost all of the classes, the children's work is well presented.

- The children make very good use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum and are confident in a range of ICT skills, including coding, and have begun recently to explore robotics.
- The children acquire systematically numeracy skills and concepts within the foundation stage and key stage (KS) 2; the children's progress in KS1 is not as consistent and needs to align more closely to the whole school scheme of work for mathematics. The children make very good progression in acquiring ICT skills through their work in school and with a locally based ICT business.
- The children are well behaved and are very supportive of each other as they work in pairs and small groups. They respond enthusiastically to taking on leadership roles during class activities and in other areas of school life, for example, in the playground, the Eco-committee and School Council. The children are developing positive attitudes to learning and are reflective about their work, often demonstrating resilience and perseverance in learning through their mistakes. In discussions with a group of year 6 children, they have high aspirations of what they can achieve in school and in their future careers.

6. Quality of provision

- The profiles of numeracy and ICT have been raised throughout the school by: interactive and imaginative numeracy displays; accessibility to a good range of appropriate numeracy resources; the weekly and monthly rewards and achievements celebration assemblies; and, links with local businesses for the development of ICT. All of these have impacted positively on the children's interest and attitude to mathematics and ICT.

- The quality of the planning, learning and teaching is good. The current focus on improving the children's verbal responses in numeracy is evident within the teachers' use of open-ended questioning and their high expectations for children to give answers in full sentences using an expanding mathematical vocabulary. In the most effective practice, in a majority of lessons, the teachers: are highly skilful in exploiting all opportunities for learning; build very effectively on the children's prior learning; and, use plenary sessions to embed numeracy language, skills and knowledge. The children are well supported by the classroom assistants. The teachers' medium-term planning—includes effective differentiation to meet the children's individual learning needs and is informed by both the children's and teachers' evaluation of learning. There is currently no whole-school overview for mental mathematics and as a result there are inconsistencies across the classes in the teaching of the key strategies and associated language.
- 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 school's focus on attendance and the introduction of the breakfast club have reduced significantly the children's lateness and are beginning to improve attendance figures. The range of after-school activities, including those focusing on the curriculum; and the value placed by the staff on the children's achievement and aspirations for success within and beyond the primary school, all contribute to supporting the children in overcoming potential barriers to learning.

7. Leadership and management

- The highly effective strategic leadership has raised the educational profile of the school in recent years by establishing high expectations of all members of the school community and the further involvement of parents and guardians in their children's learning and the life and work of the school. The school has reviewed appropriately the senior and middle leadership teams. The co-ordinators are knowledgeable in their area of responsibility and are very effective role models of learning and teaching.
- The school development plan identifies appropriate and well-paced areas for improvement. There is clear evidence of the impact of the recent work to raise the school's profile by the increasing enrolment, the motivation and behaviour of the children and the continuous pursuit of improving the children's outcomes. The school uses a range of strategies, including the rigorous analysis of available performance data, to monitor and evaluate appropriately the quality of provision and the outcomes achieved by the children.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are highly committed to the school; they promote the value of education and are developing the school as an integral part of the local community. They are building their capacity to govern the school and recognise there are aspects of governance to review namely, the need to continue to attend regularly relevant governor training.

- The school has established a range of effective links with the local churches and community groups including the deployment of a youth pastor as a home-link liaison for parents. There are very effective links with the local pre-school, primary and post-primary schools where partnerships are being developed throughout the school year and at key stages of transition for the children. The school has established global educational connections that promote curricular collaboration and co-operation arrangements for the staff and children.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The children report that they feel safe in the school and that they are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or welfare.
- It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the children and the staff.

8. Overall effectiveness

Blythefield Primary School demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. There is an area for improvement that the school has demonstrated the capacity to address. The area for improvement is:

- to continue to raise the standards of the children's confidence in and use of mathematical language.

The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.

Health and safety / Accommodation

1. There is a need to review the security arrangements at the main entrance to the school to ensure the care and welfare of the children and the staff.
2. A section of the tiled floor in the downstairs corridor is in a state of disrepair.
3. A number of wooden window frames on the upper corridor do not close and are in a state of disrepair.

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 observed learning and teaching, scrutinised documentation and the children's written work and held formal and informal discussions with children, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with a representative 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 in 12 to 18 months.
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 in 18 to 24 months.

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

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