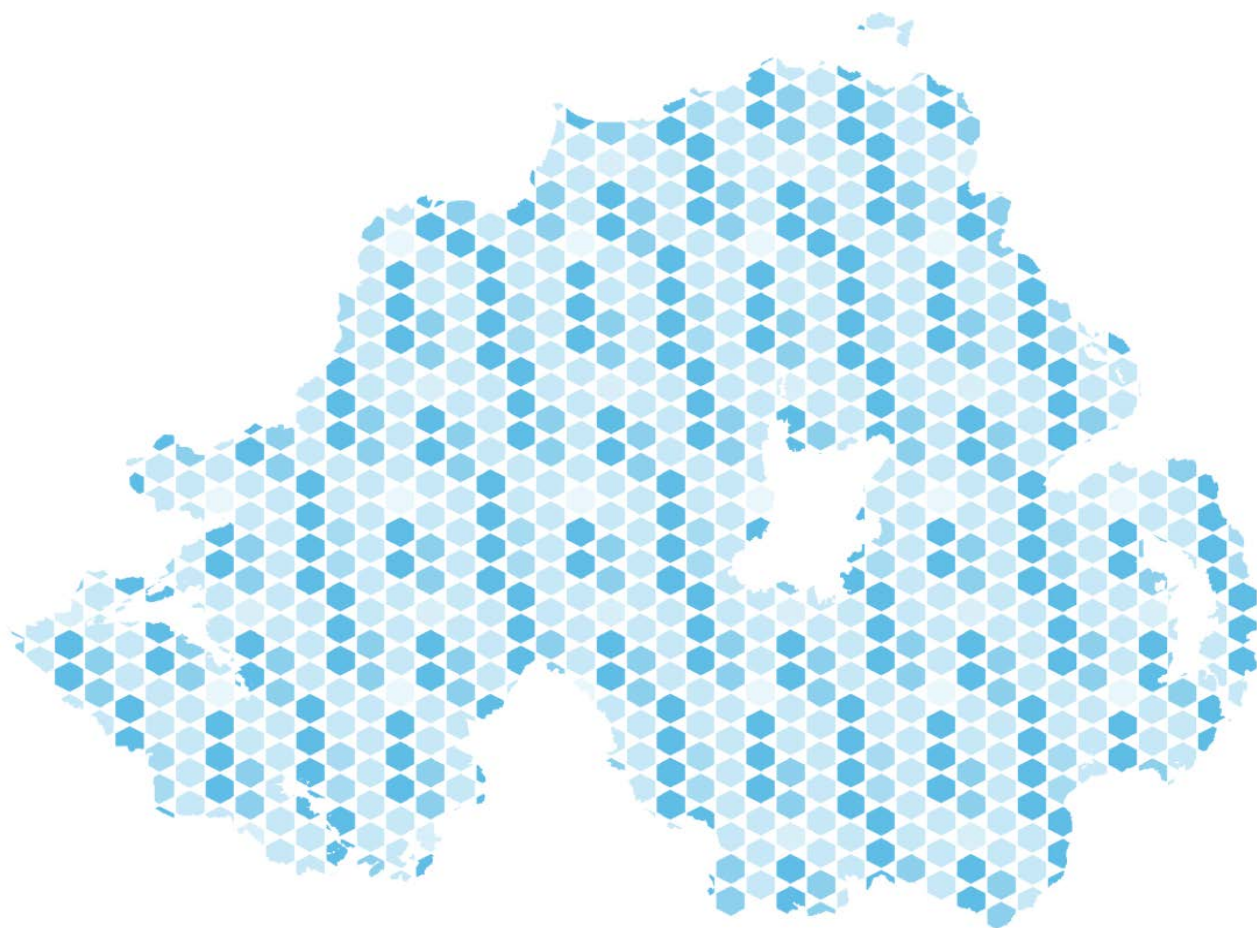


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Elmgrove Primary School and  
Nursery Unit, Belfast

Controlled, co-educational

Report of an Inspection in  
October 2016

## Quantitative 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%

## Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels when reporting on Achievements and standards, on Provision for learning and on Leadership and management:

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.
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.

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## **1. Inspection method and evidence base**

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of primary schools, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self-evaluation* at: <https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/together-towards-improvement-primary>.

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.

Thirty-six percent of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaires. A small number of parents responded, of whom most indicated high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school and its leadership. The written comments highlighted the inclusive ethos and the genuine care the staff at all levels demonstrate towards the children. All of the responses from the staff agreed the school is well led and managed and almost all agreed that the governors have a clear understanding of the work and context of the school. The teachers' written comments emphasised the highly effective care shown to the children and the staff. The ETI has reported to the principal and a representative of the board of governors the main issue around communication with parents and with staff on the split site emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

## **2. Focus of inspection**

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all children, the purpose of inspection is, through effective linking of internal and external approaches, to evaluate the:

- children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy (including how the school is addressing low attainment and underachievement where applicable);
- quality of provision for learning in the school including the nursery unit; and
- quality of leadership and management.

## **3. Context**

Elmgrove Primary School and Nursery Unit is a controlled primary school situated in East Belfast. The school has been operating over two sites since 1 September 2015 and will continue to do so until the end of the 2016-17 academic year. It is intended that additional mobile accommodation will be provided on the Elmgrove site during 2016-17 to enable all classes with the exception of the nursery unit to decant onto the Elmgrove site by September 2017.

Both school sites are situated in the Inner East Belfast Neighbourhood Renewal Area, subsequently most of the children come from a catchment area of high socio-economic deprivation. Elmgrove Primary School was subject to two development proposals, 223 and 224, approved by the Department of Education in May 2015, to increase enrolment and establish Learning Support Units and a Nursery Unit within the school, concurrent with the closure of Avoniel Primary School on 31 August 2015. Elmgrove Primary School received the majority of remaining children from Avoniel Primary School in September 2015 without the transfer of pastoral or academic information. New temporary and auxiliary staff were recruited to cope with the expansion.

The number of newcomers has increased significantly in the last year while the proportion of children requiring additional help with aspects of their learning has reduced over the past three years. Elmgrove Primary School has a voluntary collaborative partnership with another controlled primary school. The school holds a green flag award as an Eco-school.

<b>Elmgrove Primary School</b>	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2016-17</b>
Enrolment	572	560	690	679
% School attendance	92.5	92.7	91.8	N/A
% NI Primary school average	95.6	95.4	N/A	N/A
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	67.5	65.7	64.5	65.4
No. of children on SEN register	208	183	194	179
% of children on SEN register	36.36	32.67	28.11	26.36
No. of children with statements of educational need	18	26	26	20
No. of newcomer children	36	46	94	95

**Source:** data as held by the school.

\* fewer than 5

N/A not available

#### **4. Overall findings of the inspection**

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Important areas for improvement
<b>Achievements and standards</b>	Important areas for improvement
<b>Provision for learning</b>	Good
<b>Leadership and management</b>	Good
<b>Nursery Unit</b>	Good

#### **5. Achievements and standards**

- Overall, the children's standards in both literacy and numeracy are important areas for improvement. Whilst the school has begun to implement a wide range of strategies to raise standards, currently too high a proportion of children are underachieving.

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

- Generally, the children's oral skills are not developed sufficiently. They lack a range of vocabulary, do not offer extended responses and are not always confident in offering opinions. The standards of reading are improving across the school, as a result of a range of appropriately targeted supportive interventions, but the development of the children's reading skills remains an ongoing area for improvement, particularly in key stage (KS) 2. In the foundation stage, the children respond well to stories and rhyme and write basic sentences. In KS1 and 2, the children write for a range of purposes, and for an increasing range of audiences; however, the accuracy, the presentation and the quality of their independent and extended writing are inconsistent across the curriculum.
- Across the key stages, the children enjoy and engage well with the practical mathematical activities. Within the foundation stage, the children are confident in their counting and knowledge of shapes, patterns and number recognition. During the numeracy lessons in KS1 and 2, the children are beginning to use a wider range of strategies to complete their mental mathematic calculations; however, they lack the oral language skills and mathematical vocabulary to explain their reasoning and justify their thinking. The children in KS2 are not secure in their knowledge and understanding of multiplication tables and basic number facts, which impacts on their ability and confidence to engage in problem solving activities and investigations.
- The children demonstrate very good standards in their use of information and communication technology (ICT). They use competently a range of software packages to record, present, and edit their work in a variety of digital forms.
- Most of the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning make very good progress in developing their literacy and numeracy.
- Almost all of the children within the nursery unit are settled and are well-behaved. They respond appropriately to the daily routines and are able to self-register, label their own work and move easily between activities. At this stage of the year, many of the children engage well in sustained play; however, most of the children do not engage collaboratively with their peers. A majority of the children have been identified as having speech and language difficulties and most respond well to the adults' modelled language. Many of the children show an interest in early mark making and in books and the majority display very good attention and listening skills during story sessions.
- The children are friendly, polite and show respect in their interactions with their peers and other adults. Most work well collaboratively in paired activities, are motivated to learn and are becoming more confident to 'have a go' and learn from their mistakes.

## **6. Provision for learning**

- Most of the lessons observed were good or very good. The teachers use effective questioning that encourages the children to give more extended answers. Very good use is made of mobile technology as a learning and assessment tool to extend, enhance and record the children's learning. The classroom assistants make a valued and effective contribution to promoting positive behaviour and provide good learning support. Precise needs are diagnosed at the earliest stage and intervention strategies, including very good withdrawal support for literacy and numeracy, are provided for the children who have additional learning needs.

- A minority of lessons, that required improvement, were characterised by: insufficient opportunities for the children to develop their thinking skills or explain their reasoning; a lack of sufficient pace to the lesson; and no clear focus on the intended learning outcome. A new policy for marking and the use of peer- and self-assessment has been introduced recently in response to the monitoring of the children's books. The policy is not yet embedded fully in practice and there remains an inconsistent approach to the quality of the teachers' marking and in the opportunities for the children to peer- and self-assess.
- The whole-school planning for literacy has been reviewed; it outlines appropriate progression for knowledge and skills development across each year group. The teachers' medium-term planning does not, however, reflect fully the range of teaching strategies required to link the planning for learning in literacy to the development of the wider cross-curricular skills, including the development of thinking skills and personal capabilities. In KS 1 and 2, the use of talking and listening, and reading, as a preparation for writing was not well-developed. The teachers are not making good enough use of novels and non-fiction texts to promote effective discussion opportunities and do not give the children meaningful contexts to develop, and apply, a wider range of vocabulary choices, and writing approaches, to their own work. The provision for play-based learning in the foundation stage provides very good opportunities for the children to develop and practise their communication skills. The very good range of support programmes for reading and literacy are effective in developing the skills of the children who experience difficulties in this area.
- Across all key stages, including the nursery unit, use is being made of the recently introduced mathematics resources to enhance the children's practical mathematics and begin to deepen their understanding of basic concepts. The introduction of new approaches to the teaching of numeracy has ensured that all of the numeracy lessons observed had a clear structure and focus on developing mathematical language and the acquisition of a wider range of strategies. At present, the numeracy sessions associated with a commercial resource are often too teacher-directed and the children are not challenged sufficiently to extend their answers and to use the correct mathematical terms that have been modelled by the teacher. The work in numeracy is differentiated to meet the needs of the majority of the children; however, during the inspection, there were missed opportunities to challenge and extend the more able children.
- The overall provision for children in the nursery unit is good. The interactions of the staff were of good to very good quality. The adults encouraged the children to extend their thinking and learning through the use of open-ended questioning and the enthusiasm displayed during story-time enhances the children's interest for stories and books. The recently reviewed planning provides good opportunities for learning across the pre-school curriculum and guides well the work of the staff. Regular observations undertaken by the staff, supported by samples and photographs of the children's work, are used effectively to assess the children's learning and inform future planning to meet their individual needs. Effective links have been established with staff in the primary school to ensure an effective transition for the children and use is also made of the facilities on the foundation stage site.

- The provision for the care and welfare of the children within the school and nursery unit is of an outstanding quality. This is evidenced through the welcoming, inclusive ethos, the respect for diversity, the value placed on respecting the rights of all in the school community and the successful extension of care and support such as counselling services to the children and their families and to the staff.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The senior leadership team shares a clear strategic vision and sets high standards of professionalism for the school. The senior leadership team is committed highly to addressing the significant range of complex social, emotional and behavioural needs of the children in order to develop more effectively their readiness to learn. They have placed an appropriately high priority on: strategies to support the children with additional learning needs; a restructuring of staff roles and responsibilities to ensure this support is resourced sufficiently; and home-school liaison to ensure the children's attendance is at a high level. The curricular teams are at an early stage of development and the impact of the work being done by the school to raise achievement is not yet evaluated sufficiently.
- All stakeholders are consulted in the school planning process and the school development plan, which provides a clear framework for the improvement direction of the school, is informed by a range of assessment data, including attitudinal surveys. Action plans are aligned closely to the priorities of the school development plan but are not linked sharply to the intended impact on the learning outcomes of the children.
- The school has effective links with local businesses and churches and promotes links with its parents through, for example, induction meetings and home-school visits. A link with a local post-primary school is providing good opportunities for the children to have higher aspirations and is enriching the curricular provision offered by the school by, for example, engagement in joint musical events.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors have a wide range of professional skills that are used very effectively to guide and challenge the senior leadership in the action to promote improvement through, for example, the re-organisation of support for children with additional learning needs which has impacted positively on the standards for those children. They have provided effective support to the principal and staff during the ongoing transition and are well placed to address the improvement in the children's attainment.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. In discussions with the inspectors, the children in KS2 reported that they are happy and secure in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their well-being.



## **8. Overall effectiveness**

Elmgrove Primary School and Nursery Unit needs to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners.

The areas for improvement are:

- to improve the overall standards the children achieve in literacy and numeracy; and
- to monitor and evaluate rigorously the impact of the work of the school, including the curricular teams, on the quality of provision and on the standards achieved by the children.

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 12 to 18 months.

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