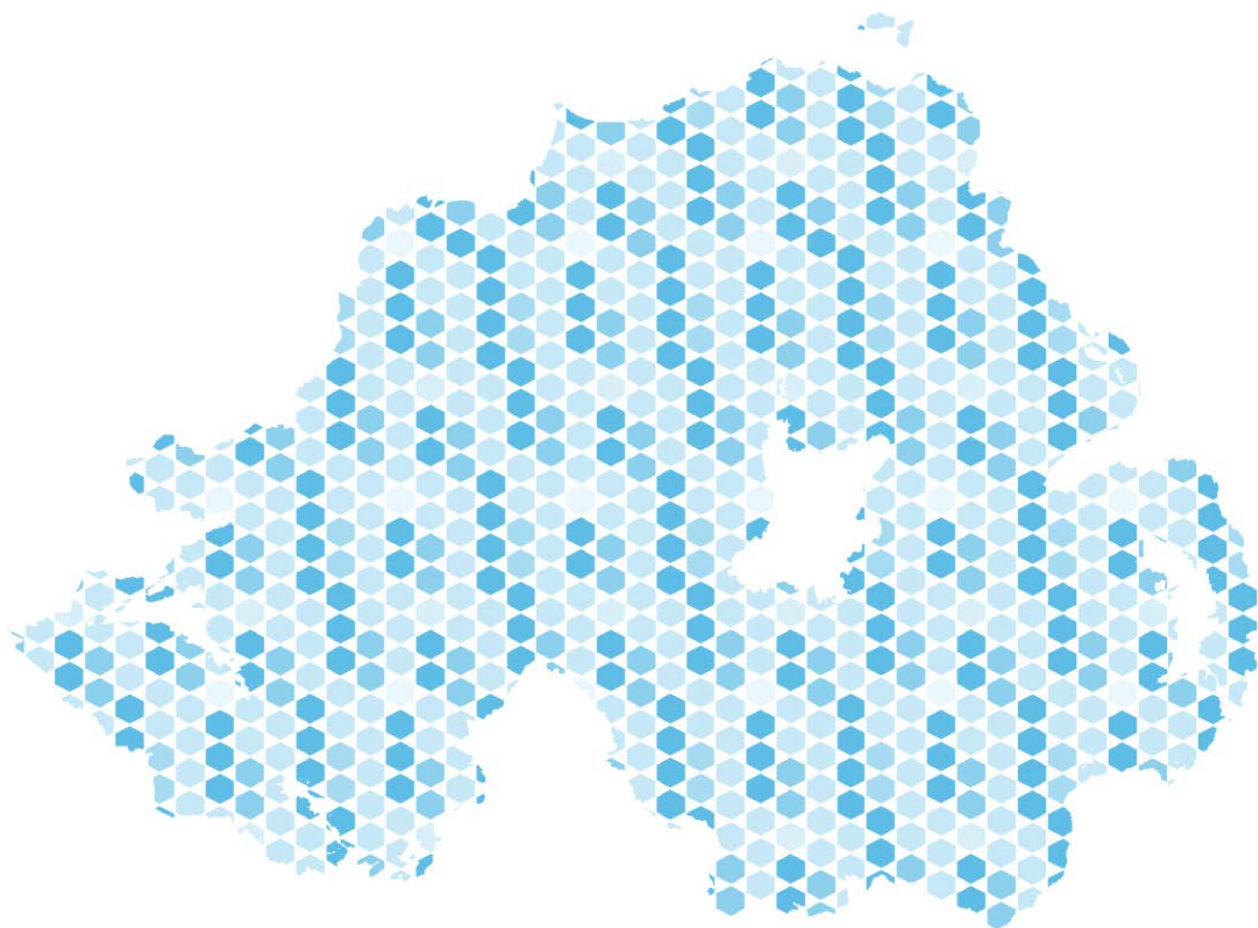


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Portstewart Primary School
and Nursery Unit, County
Londonderry

Report of an Inspection in
May 2016



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing Inspection Services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
Department for Communities

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



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 Achievement 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: <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-primary.htm>.

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 representatives from the governors;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete confidential questionnaires.

Eight percent of parents and almost all of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaires. The parental responses indicate very high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, they highlighted the quality and breadth of the learning experiences, expressed confidence in the staff and principal, and commented positively on their children's progress. The staff responses were also very positive; they emphasised the child-centred ethos and their commitment to meeting the needs of the children. The ETI has reported to the principal and representatives of the board of governors the responses 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

Portstewart Primary School and Nursery Unit is a controlled primary school situated in Central Avenue, Portstewart. The adjacent nursery unit operates one full-time session for 26 children. Almost all of the children attending the school come from the town. The enrolment has increased over the last four years, as have the percentage of children entitled to free school meals and the number of children who require additional help with aspects of their learning.

Portstewart Primary School and Nursery Unit	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Enrolment	254	266	267	275
Nursery Unit enrolment	26	26	26	26
% School attendance	94	94.4	94.3	N/A
% NI Primary school average	94.9	95.6	N/A	N/A
FSME Percentage ¹	28.4	30.8	34.8	36.4
No. of children on SEN register	41	45	63	65
% of children on SEN register	16.4	16.9	23.6	23.4
No. of children with statements of educational need	*	*	*	*
No. of newcomer children	7	9	12	16

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

N/A not available

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Achievements and standards	Very good
Provision for learning	Very good
Leadership and management	Very good
Nursery Unit	Good

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are motivated and enthusiastic learners who engage readily with their peers and adults. From an early age, they take on roles and responsibilities confidently and maturely. As the children progress through the school, they demonstrate a strong sense of identity with and pride in their school community.
- The school's internal performance data shows that almost all of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make progress in English in line with their ability or above expectation. In mathematics, most of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make progress in line with their ability or above expectation.
- Throughout the school, the children's talking and listening skills are very well developed. Almost all of the children articulate their ideas and opinions with confidence and engage competently in paired and group discussion. The most able children in year 7 read with expression, display high levels of interest in reading for enjoyment and discuss knowledgeably a range of forms and authors. Across all year groups, the children write enthusiastically and with increasing independence across the curriculum for a wide variety of purposes and audiences.

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

- The children enjoy mathematics and, as they progress through the school, grow in mathematical competence and confidence. They engage co-operatively in an appropriately broad range of mathematical activities and talk confidently about their learning. The children apply appropriate mental mathematics strategies to solve problems and complete successfully the investigations. By year 7, the most able children are: accurate in their use of mathematical language; have a very good knowledge of the key concepts across all areas of the mathematics curriculum; and, demonstrate flexibility in their mathematical reasoning.
- The children in the nursery unit display very good levels of independence and confidence, and engage positively with the learning activities. They are developing their social skills and co-operate well with the daily routines. The children listen and respond well to group stories, songs and rhymes and many display an enjoyment of books. Many of the children engage readily in mark making and a minority are able to write their own name. The children assume easily the roles within the role play area and produce creative and imaginative representational drawings. They develop gross motor skills through their enthusiastic participation in physical energetic play outdoors and show very good levels of balance, co-ordination and teamwork.
- The children use information and communication technology (ICT) creatively, independently and purposefully to support and enhance their learning. They use a wide range of software skilfully and competently in meaningful real-life situations across the curriculum.

6. Provision for learning

- Almost all of the lessons observed were effective in progressing the children's learning; the quality of learning and teaching in over half of the lessons was very good or outstanding. In these lessons, the teachers connect and progress skilfully the children's learning across the curriculum, taking account of the children's interests, experiences and prior learning. The well-planned activities develop the children's thinking skills and personal capabilities, and effective questioning enables the children to reflect on and develop their responses. To improve further the quality of learning and teaching, there is a need to ensure consistent challenge in the learning experiences across key stages, in particular, for the more able children. The children's work is marked regularly and affirmatively and, in the most effective practice, the teachers' feedback enables the children to improve their work.
- The programme for literacy provides a very good framework for progression in talking and listening, reading and writing. The teachers integrate literacy across the curriculum through a range of well-planned activities, supported by appropriate resources, including ICT. The staff are reviewing currently the whole-school programme to improve further the integration of literacy throughout the school. At all key stages, the children's writing is enriched by highly effective and meaningful talking and listening and reading experiences. The library is used very effectively to encourage further the children's interest in reading.

- The whole school planning for mathematics ensures a balanced coverage across the areas of mathematics and appropriate progression in the children's learning. The well-planned mathematical experiences are stimulating and varied and have an appropriate emphasis on exploring the use of mathematics in real and relevant contexts. The teachers make effective use of ICT and a wide range of open-ended and appropriately challenging investigations to engage the children's mathematical curiosity, extend their thinking and develop their understanding.
- Appropriate use is made of performance data and pastoral information to identify children who require additional support with aspects of their learning. These children are supported well in class and in withdrawal sessions by the teachers, classroom assistants and their peers. The individual education plans place appropriate focus on the children's learning needs and on their social and emotional development.
- In the nursery unit, the adults work very well as a team to care for and support the children. The staff's interactions with the children are of a very good quality. There are good opportunities for learning across most areas of the pre-school curriculum. The staff need to develop the outdoor area in order to enhance further the quality of the children's learning experiences.
- The quality of the provision for pastoral care is outstanding. There are excellent working relationships at all levels and the staff are highly committed to the academic and pastoral needs of the children. The children demonstrate confidence and empathy in supporting each other in their learning and, as they progress through the school, work in partnership with the staff to create a positive and welcoming ethos. The breadth of the curricular and extra-curricular experiences nurtures the children's curiosity as learners and develops their personal and social skills. The children's views are sought and acted upon, and they are involved in decisions on aspects of school life that are important to them.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. The children participate in a wide range of sporting activities and the school council, in co-operation with the canteen staff, plays an important role in encouraging the children to develop healthy eating habits.

7. Leadership and management

- The senior leadership team (SLT) is highly effective and sets a positive and collegial tone for school improvement. They have a clear strategic direction for all involved with the school and provide high quality support and guidance for staff. Through a culture of encouragement and appropriate challenge, the SLT continues to build the capacity of all staff in monitoring and evaluating the quality of learning and teaching and the standards attained by the children in the school and nursery unit.

- The holistic development of the children and a commitment to their well-being are central to the school improvement process. The school development plan², which is in its final year, is informed by meaningful consultation with all stakeholders and effective use of data. The school can demonstrate that the associated action plans have led to improvement in the quality of provision and, achievements and standards.
- A key feature of the provision is the participation of parents and the local community in the learning experiences to enrich the curriculum. The children and staff benefit from well-conceived and creative shared learning experiences with the neighbouring primary school and post primary school.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the ETI evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. With effective support and guidance from the principal, the governors have developed their capacity to support and, as appropriate, challenge, the staff in bringing about sustained improvement.
- 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 year 6 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

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

² The school development plan meets the requirements of the School Development Planning Regulations (NI) 2010.

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