

PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Paul's Primary School and
Nursery Unit, Belfast

Maintained, 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

St Paul's Primary School and Nursery Unit are situated in the Beechmount area of West Belfast which is an area of high economic and social deprivation; consequently, over three-quarters of the children are entitled to free school meals. The nursery unit is located off site, a short distance from the primary school. Since the last inspection, there has been significant staffing changes, including the appointment of a new principal and vice principal. Both the school and the nursery unit have an inclusive ethos and welcome children from a wide variety of backgrounds. Almost all of the children attending come from the local area.

St Paul's Primary School and Nursery Unit	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Enrolment Primary	247	254	264	297
Enrolment Nursery Unit	52	52	52	52
% School attendance	94.9	93.9	93.8	94.7
% NI Primary school average	95.6	95.4	94.6	N/A
FS ME Percentage ¹	75.59	68.63	73.1	76.8
No. of children on SEN register	81	96	86	120
% of children on SEN register	32.79	37.8	32.58	39.06
No. of children with statements of educational need	5	6	*	6
No. of newcomer children	35	37	53	62

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

N/A not available

2. Views of parents and staff

Approximately nine percent of parents in the primary school and the nursery unit, and a majority of the staff members, responded to the confidential questionnaire. Almost all of the staff and parental responses were positive, indicating high levels of satisfaction with almost all aspects of the life and work of the school. The ETI has reported to the principal and representatives of the board of governors the findings of the confidential questionnaires including the strengths and the issues raised around aspects of leadership and management.

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 and literacy including across the curriculum and how the school is addressing low attainment and underachievement where applicable;
- quality of provision with a particular focus on numeracy and literacy including across the curriculum and the nursery unit; 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	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
Quality of provision	Very good
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Nursery Unit	Very good

KEY FINDINGS

5. Outcomes for learners

- The children make excellent progress in their learning and, by the end of key stage (KS) 2, attain high standards in literacy and numeracy.
- In the foundation stage, the children are developing well their knowledge of all areas of mathematics and are using mathematical language confidently during play. In KS 1, the children communicate coherently their mathematical thinking and reasoning when completing problem-solving activities. By the end of KS 2, the children discuss confidently their use of mathematics across the curriculum and their enjoyment of contextualised learning experiences. The children's understanding and application of the mental mathematics strategies require further development in mathematical lessons.
- In the foundation stage, the children are developing very well their written and presentational skills. In KS 1 and 2, the children engage very well in discussions and are able to express their ideas clearly and coherently. As the children progress through the key stages, they write with increasing accuracy and proficiency to produce written work of a very high standard. By year 7, the most able children read with appropriate intonation and fluency, and can discuss their reading preferences with confidence and maturity.
- The children in the nursery unit are developing very well their independence and social skills. They demonstrate excellent attention and listening skills during whole group story and song sessions. The children have a high level of interest in mark making and experimental writing. They show a very good awareness of early mathematical concepts and language associated with number, time and measurement. The children who still require encouragement to make choices and sustain their independent play respond well and make good progress through the skilful support from the staff.
- Across the school, the children use information and communication technology (ICT) competently and creatively to enhance and develop their skills and capabilities and, as a result, most of the children, achieve very good standards in ICT. The children use ICT effectively to support the planning, drafting, editing and presenting of their work.
- The children's behaviour is exemplary; they are respectful towards their peers and the staff and engage very well with visitors. Almost all demonstrate very good dispositions for learning, respond positively to the teachers' expectations, engage enthusiastically with their learning and demonstrate very good levels of independence. The children demonstrate a high level of empathy for the needs of others.

6. Quality of provision

- There is a very good, coherent approach to planning, learning and assessment throughout the school. The planning guides the teachers very effectively in their work and ensures variety and progression in the learning. Almost all of the teachers' evaluations are used well to inform future learning and teaching. The children's books are marked regularly and the teacher's written comments provide clear guidance on how best to improve further their work.
- During the inspection, four-fifths of the lessons observed were very good or outstanding. In these lessons, the teachers have high expectations of the children, recap effectively on previous learning, establish connections across the curriculum, ask skilful questions to extend the children's responses and provide interesting and well-differentiated work to meet the needs of all of the children. The learning activities, for those children identified as requiring additional support, were informed appropriately by the targets and strategies included in their individual education plans.
- In mathematics, the teachers are skilled in their modelling of mathematical language. The use of a detailed numeracy profile enables the teachers to track effectively the progress of the children and differentiate the learning. A review of the resources has resulted in improved practical and active learning experiences for the children throughout the school.
- There is a systematic, progressive and holistic approach to the teaching of phonics, reading and writing skills; these approaches are improving the quality of the children's learning experiences and are raising further the reading and writing standards attained by the children. In the most effective practice, in almost all of the literacy lessons, the children have excellent opportunities to develop their appreciation of literature and an in-depth awareness of the spoken and written word to communicate meaning, feelings and ideas to a range of audiences.
- The provision for children who require support with their learning is of a high quality. The school's assessment data is used effectively to identify and baseline children who require withdrawal support. There is appropriate planning for the duration of the support and detailed reports are provided on completion of the intervention. The contribution of the classroom assistants in this process is a key strength of the provision.
- The staff in the nursery unit provide a stimulating and language-rich learning environment both indoors and outdoors. They are nurturing and respectful to the children, promote very effectively settled play, support the children's own ideas and model very well key vocabulary and early mathematical language. All of the staff contribute to planning a varied pre-school programme which is evaluated and reviewed regularly. The assessment processes are being developed appropriately to link more closely the assessment information to the needs and interests of the children.
- The play programme in the foundation stage lacks the extent of variety, challenge and progression as evident in the children's play-based learning in the nursery unit.

- 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 children's rights and responsibilities are promoted actively in school life. The children's self-esteem is developed well in class and through access to a range of extra-curricular activities and opportunities that help build their maturity, skills and self-confidence.

7. Leadership and management

- The senior leadership team provide very effective strategic leadership based on a shared vision for school improvement which is focused appropriately on providing the highest quality experiences and outcomes for the children.
- There is a well-embedded culture of self-evaluation in the school which involves all key stakeholders and is evident throughout all aspects of the school's provision. A very effective school development plan and the associated action plans inform improvement in the children's learning experiences and outcomes.
- 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 are proactive in supporting the staff and children, and promoting the school in the community. The governors are very knowledgeable about learning and understand well the challenging issues that affect the life and work of the school; as a result, they carry out their support and challenge function thoroughly and constructively.
- The co-ordinators are highly effective in leading and sustaining improvement in their curricular areas of responsibility. They provide appropriate support and guidance to their colleagues through high quality staff development which leads to improved learning outcomes for the 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.

8. Overall effectiveness

St Paul's Primary School and Nursery Unit 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.

Health and safety / Accommodation

1. Most classroom doors do not have visibility panels to enable visual access to teaching areas, in line with safeguarding recommendations.
2. Internal fire doors and surrounds have been compromised by the addition of plywood panelling and there is no evidence to indicate the panels are compliant with fire regulations.
3. Valuable floor space is used for the storage of resources and equipment and presents a safety hazard.
4. There is no disabled access and facility in the school.
5. There is no means of preventing access throughout the school, once access through the main door is granted.

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 representatives 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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