

Report of a Primary Inspection  
King's Park Primary and Nursery School

October 2024



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# **1. INTRODUCTION**

## **A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

King's Park Primary and Nursery School is a controlled school situated in Lurgan. Almost all of the children attending the school come from Lurgan town. There are currently 663 children attending the school, 17% (111) of whom have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN). Approximately one-fifth of the children are newcomers, and a similar proportion have free school meals entitlement.

The principal has been in post since November 2021 and the vice-principal was appointed in January 2022. There are 27 classes in the school and three classes in the nursery unit.

There is a full-size Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) within the school grounds and the school is part of a Department of Education's major capital works scheme which is currently in the design and planning stage.

The school is an Eco-Schools 'Green Flag' recipient and are sporting champions across a wide range of sports, including hockey, cross-country, football and cricket.

## **B. VIEWS OF PARENTS, LEARNERS AND STAFF**

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) issued online confidential questionnaires to year 7 children and all staff and parents/carers in advance of the inspection. A summary of all the questionnaire responses was shared with the principal and representatives from the board of governors, respecting the confidentiality of the respondents.

Almost all of the year 7 children responded to the questionnaire and almost one-third provided written comments. All of the children indicated that the teachers and other adults in the school treat them with care and respect and all know that there is someone they can talk to if they are worried or have a problem. In the written comments, the children told us that they are well supported in their work and they are proud of their school.

Over two-fifths of the parents/carers responded to the questionnaire, 67 of whom provided written comments. Almost all indicated that their child is happy at school and is making good progress in their learning. The parents/carers wrote about their appreciation of the helpful and caring staff and the wide range of after-school clubs that their child benefits from attending.

Most of the staff, including all of the teachers, responded to the questionnaire and all were highly positive in their support of the work of the school. All staff are clear about the school's vision and that their views are sought, valued and acted upon. Overall, there were sixteen written comments highlighting the positive promotion of wellbeing for the staff in the school.

## **C. THE PROCESS OF INSPECTION**

The ETI worked alongside King's Park Primary and Nursery School to consider how well the school:

- has identified and articulates its vision;
- prioritises actions to achieve the vision;
- overcomes the main challenges it faces;
- monitors and reviews progression to identify, celebrate and embed success; and
- grows and develops an inclusive community of learning.

## **2. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS**

- A key strength of the school is the welcoming and inclusive school community underpinned by positive relationships at every level.
- The staff have reviewed the school ethos and have plans in place to review the school vision in response to the changing context and needs of the children; this is providing an opportunity for the staff to reflect on the already well-established partnership between the school and home which impacts positively on the children.
- The staff analyse and use a wide range of quantitative and qualitative information to inform their identification of whole school priorities.
- The recent focus on the children's emotional health and wellbeing has successfully created a culture where children know how to manage their emotions and understand how they can learn from mistakes.
- The children who have been identified as having special educational needs are supported well in their learning by the teachers and the classroom assistants and are making good progress from their individual starting points.
- Success is identified and celebrated well across and beyond the school, resulting in happy and confident children.
- The nursery children are well settled; they follow easily the routines and engage in safe, concentrated levels of collaborative play with confidence and independence.
- The caring and supportive staff across the whole school have created an environment in which the children feel welcomed, happy and safe.

- The staff and children are accepting, respectful and supportive of one another and of the range of cultures, backgrounds and beliefs within the school community.
- The planning directs the teaching well and meets effectively the needs of the children, providing them with opportunities to make progress.
- At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the school demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance.

Area for action:

- to provide a wider range of opportunities for the children to develop further their thinking skills and personal capabilities.

### **3. MAIN REPORT**

#### **A. SETTING THE VISION**

The staff reviewed to good effect the school ethos statement in August 2024 in order to reflect their changing context and the needs of the children and school community. The children contribute to the school's Christian ethos through the care and respect they have for their friends and school staff in **'the safe, inclusive and respectful environment'**.

The governors and staff value the strong collaborative links between home and school for the success and wellbeing of the children in their care. The children are welcomed by staff on arrival at the school doors every morning and this impacts positively on the children as they arrive to lessons settled and ready to learn **'in partnership with the school and parents/carers'**.

The leaders gather a wide range of quantitative and qualitative data and have identified key priority areas on the transitional school development plan as part of their self-evaluation process to help them achieve their vision **'to provide each child with a quality education which meets their individual needs.'** The school is working hard, and with success, post industrial action by the teaching unions, at re-establishing its full range of self-evaluation procedures, including the gathering of first-hand evidence, which will support further the development planning process.

#### **B. IMPLEMENTING AND IMPROVING TO ACHIEVE THE VISION**

The planning reflects the statutory requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum which directs the teaching and meets effectively the needs of the children. Children are provided with a range of learning activities and in the more effective practice the learning potential is identified clearly and builds well on prior learning. To improve the planning, the school should review how it can provide the children with a wider range of opportunities to develop their thinking skills and personal capabilities.



The children are motivated, maintain focus, work together effectively and engage actively in their learning. They have positive attitudes to their learning and when provided with opportunity, contribute well to discussions, explaining their thoughts and ideas.

In the most effective practice, teachers use open ended questions to prompt thinking and extend the learning, and they reflect regularly on the responses of the children to inform future planning. In addition, a variety of approaches including adjustments to the curriculum are used to support the children to make progress. Providing children with more opportunities to reflect on their own learning through self- and peer-assessment will assist them to identify how to improve their learning.

The nursery team have a sound understanding of how pre-school children learn and use the curriculum to guide their long-, medium- and short-term planning. Effective and ongoing observation and assessment methods inform planning for the individual abilities, needs and interests of all the children. The stimulating, spacious and well-planned learning environment is used well to deliver all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The nursery entrance hall has been adapted effectively to include a sensory space for the development of the children's emotional health and wellbeing and a readiness to learn. The children in the nursery are well settled and follow all routines with increasing confidence and independence. Early friendships are forming as they engage in safe, concentrated levels of collaborative play in well-planned learning environments.

The caring and supportive staff across the whole school have created an environment in which the children feel welcomed, happy and safe. All children, in discussions with inspectors, report that they feel safe in school and online. The recent focus on the development of emotional health and wellbeing has created a culture where children know how to manage their emotions and understand that mistakes are a valuable part of learning. In addition, nursery staff have accessed yoga training and disseminated the training across the foundation stage, which is impacting positively on the younger children and supporting them to settle easily to their learning.

### **C. BUILDING EQUITY**

Diversity and difference are respected and valued across the primary and nursery school. The staff and children are accepting, respectful and supportive of one another and of the range of cultures, backgrounds and beliefs within the school community. All children are encouraged to participate in all aspects of the life and work of the school and the diversity of the school's population is represented and valued through, for instance, assemblies, school productions and in extra-curricular opportunities.

The children who have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN) are supported well in their learning by the teachers and the classroom assistants and are making progress from their individual starting points. Priority is given to the early identification of the children's needs and the establishment of effective partnerships within the school, with parents and with outside agencies. In addition, the bespoke and responsive programme of staff professional learning and the well-paced,

supportive and engaging small group literacy and numeracy sessions are impacting positively on the progress the children are making and on their overall learning experiences. The leaders have initiated a review of the SEN provision across the school as part of the strategic planning for SEN. As part of this work, the school has identified the need to improve the quality of the individual education plans (IEPs) and has begun work around including incorporating the voice of the child and sharpening the targets used.

The nursery staff use the induction processes for the children, along with regular observations of their learning, to ensure the early identification of the children's needs. The strategies for overcoming language and literacy barriers for the newcomer children and their parents include the use of digital communication with translation software. Good use is made of toys and books which reflect diversity, and a range of cultural events are celebrated and valued to reflect the school's inclusive ethos.

#### **D. DEFINING, CELEBRATING AND EMBEDDING SUCCESS**

The children are well-mannered, confident and very respectful. They care for and generously praise one another and are proud of their school. In discussions the children told us that they enjoy coming to school and value the friendships they have. They spoke positively about the opportunities they have to develop their leadership skills as peer mediators, playground helpers, school council and house captains. They appreciate the positive impact they can have through these roles in their school community, which include the sharing of calming strategies with children to help them manage their emotions and fundraising for charities. They greatly appreciate the variety of extra-curricular activities on offer, such as, the wide range of sports, nature, coding, Lego, art and music clubs.

The children's successes in sport, curricular achievements and the development of personal attributes, such as 'pupil kindness,' are celebrated across and beyond the school through assemblies, prizegiving events and via the school website and social media channel. Their efforts are recognised by all staff through the consistent use of praise and encouragement.

The school uses a range of qualitative and quantitative data to monitor the progress of all children and to identify those who benefit from small group support.

The nursery children respect their indoor and outdoor learning environments and are developing well their responsibility levels through, for example, watering the plants and herbs in their sensory garden. They listen attentively to stories, rhymes and songs and participate with enthusiasm.

#### **E. GROWING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNING**

Positive relationships, at every level, are a key strength of the school and respectful and caring interactions between staff and children are evident. The children engage courteously and supportively with one another, staff, and visitors. The school communicates regularly with parents through: monthly newsletters; an online digital learning platform; and updates on the school website.

The staff across the school are dedicated to supporting children with SEN, establishing relevant links with allied health professionals and the Education Authority's Support Services to better equip them to meet the diverse needs of the children. Moving forward, it will be important to continue to strengthen the whole-school opportunities, in line with staff professional learning, for purposeful, collaborative internal and external partnerships to underpin the school's priorities for development.

Effective partnerships between the nursery school and local playgroups and primary schools ensure the smooth transition of the nursery children, in addition, collaboration with two local nursery clusters to share effective practice is benefitting staff in meeting effectively the needs of the children across all areas of the pre-school curriculum.

The school's commitment to social responsibility shines through its collaborations with local charities, which teach children the importance of community involvement and foster empathy and civic duty. Partnerships with the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS), the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and local banks and churches enrich the children's understanding of their community. The Eco-team's collaboration with the Lough Neagh Discovery Centre to erect a willow dome showcases the school's commitment to environmental education, and hosting events such as the Khulula Choir from Eswatini adds cultural richness to the learning experience of the children. Collaborations with local counselling services further support the children's emotional health and wellbeing, creating a safe and nurturing environment.

## **F. CHILD PROTECTION**

At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the school /organisation demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance.

## **4. GOING FORWARD**

King's Park Primary and Nursery School is successfully living out its school ethos to care for and educate the children in a safe, inclusive and respectful school community.

Through the work of the district inspector, ETI will monitor the progress of King's Park Primary and Nursery School in addressing the area for action set out in this report.



## 5. APPENDIX

### APPENDIX 1: 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%

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