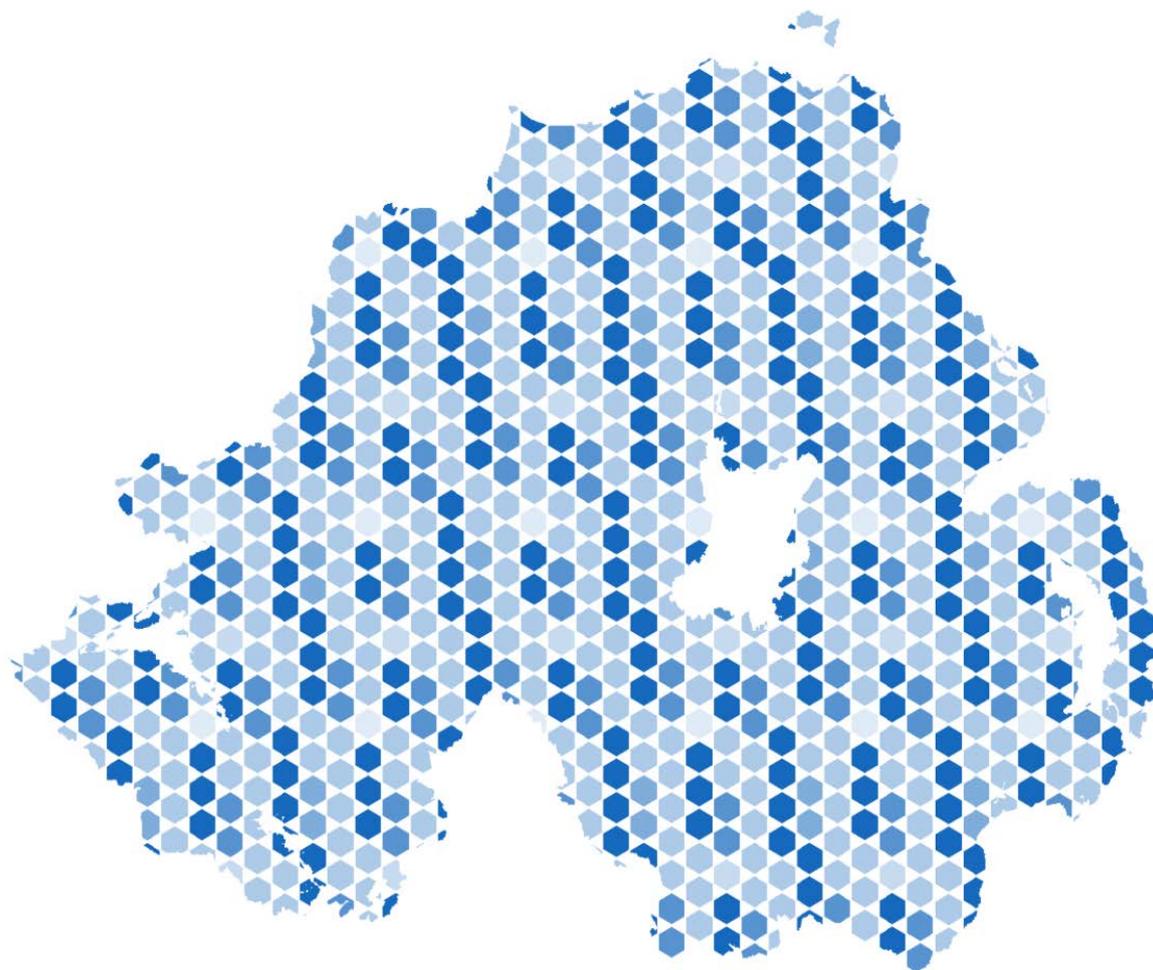


# SPECIAL SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Knockavoe School and  
Resource Centre, Strabane

Report of an inspection in  
November 2016



The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
and other commissioning Departments

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 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 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.

# Contents

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. Inspection method and evidence base	1
2. Focus of inspection	1
3. Context	1
4. Overall findings of the inspection	2
5. Achievements and outcomes	2
6. Provision for learning	3
7. Leadership and management	4
8. Overall effectiveness	5
Appendix	

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

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

Inspectors observed learning and teaching, scrutinised documentation and the pupils' written work and held formal and informal discussions with pupils (individually and in groups), teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included a meeting with representatives from the governors and the opportunity for all parents, teaching and support staff to complete confidential questionnaires.

Seven percent of parents (eight) and eighty-five percent of staff (59) responded to the questionnaires. The parental replies indicated that the school was well regarded in the community and that their children were happy and enjoyed the learning experiences provided by the staff. In additional written comments, the parents affirmed the work of the dedicated, hardworking staff who show respect and care for the children to ensure they fulfil their potential. Almost all of the staff questionnaires indicated strong support for the leadership and management of the school and the opportunities provided for professional development. The inclusive, welcoming and family ethos of the school was highlighted by the staff. An issue concerning communication within the school was discussed with the governors and management.

## **2. Focus of inspection**

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

- evaluate the quality of the provision and the outcomes for the pupils;
- evaluate the school's leadership and management and its capacity to effect and sustain improvement in its provision and outcomes; and
- inform the school's planning for improvement.

## **3. Context**

Knockavoe School & Resource Centre is situated in a residential area within Strabane. The pupils come from Strabane and the surrounding area including Sion Mills, Castlederg, Victoria Bridge and Clady. The school provides education for 116 pupils, aged 3-19 with moderate or severe learning needs, profound and multiple learning difficulties, pupils on the autistic spectrum and those with significant emotional and challenging behaviours, as well as pupils with complex medical needs. The school has achieved Investors in People silver award and Rights Respecting School status at level 1 and 2. There are well established links with the local community and the Derg Mourne area learning community partnership.

Knockavoe School and Resource Centre	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Enrolment school	105	116	118	114	116
% Attendance	81.9	88.8	89	91.6	91.6
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	88.5	87	90.6	89.4	92.2
Newcomers	*	*	*	*	*

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

\* fewer than 5

#### 4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Achievements and outcomes	Very good
Provision for learning	Very good
Leadership and management	Good

#### 5. Achievements and outcomes

- Most of the pupils are motivated and are keen to learn and engage well in their lessons. They work amicably with one another and are polite, courteous, and confident, and are learning to manage their emotions and behaviour. The pupils are developing a range of skills for life through opportunities to assume leadership roles and responsibilities such as prefect duties, membership of the school council and young enterprise.
- The senior pupils demonstrate very good social skills and are confident in engaging with one another, adults and visitors in a variety of social contexts. They enjoy a range of age appropriate opportunities, such as visits to the local fitness suite and leisure centre and for some, playing in the school rock band. They are developing well their communication skills and creativity which enables them to engage in a wide range of work experience placements.
- Most of the pupils are making good progress in their learning which is demonstrated effectively in the pictorial progression book in most classes. It is important that pupils with severe learning needs continue to develop functional skills to enable them to make sufficient progress in line with their needs and ability.
- Throughout the school the pupils engage enthusiastically in mathematical and literacy based activities and develop a good understanding of key concepts in line with their individual ability. From the foundation stage, the pupil's mathematical language and literacy skills develop well through play and daily routines, and as the pupils progress through the school they can apply their learning in real and meaningful contexts, preparing them well for adult life.

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

- In the leavers' class the pupils enjoy programmes that are matched to their interests and abilities and have an appropriate balance of accreditation, personal development and acquisition of life skills. They achieve a broad range of qualifications in vocational and academic courses, as well as additional opportunities such as speech and drama. Currently the pupils are studying for essential skills at entry level and level one, preparing them well for the transition into the next stage of their learning or life after school.

## 6. Provision for learning

- Most of the teaching was effective in promoting the pupils' learning with seventy-nine percent of the lessons observed being very good or better. In the most effective lessons, practical learning activities captured the interests of the pupils, and differentiation was of a high quality and aligned closely to each pupil's individual education plan. The relationships between the classroom assistants and teacher were very effective in supporting the pupils' learning. In the less effective lessons, in a minority of cases, the wide range of learning needs within the class were not fully met and the pace of the lesson was too slow, resulting at times in pupil disengagement. The use of information communication technology to enhance the learning experiences in the classroom is underdeveloped across the school.
- Overall, the planning for subjects and classroom activities is effective, and a coherent planning system is used throughout the school. The individual education plans have appropriate targets which focus on the primary needs of the pupils; the teachers monitor frequently the progress made and evaluate effectively the outcomes. In the most effective practice, the pupils understand, and have contributed constructively, to their targets. Planning for effective Nursery provision is restricted by limited indoor space and a restricted-access outdoor play area.
- The assessment arrangements are planned well to ensure progression throughout the school. The pupil's formative assessments are based on detailed teacher observation and a range of assessment systems, appropriate to the varied needs and age of the pupils. The assessment, tracking and recording of progress for emotional and behavioural difficulties is a particular strength. In the most effective practice, where appropriate, the pupils are given opportunities to evaluate regularly their own learning. It will be important to develop an effective system for monitoring and evaluating learning throughout the school to inform and enable management to meet more effectively the complex needs of pupils and to evaluate the success of interventions and programmes.
- The programme for mathematics provides the pupils with a broad and balanced experience of mathematical processes. In the Foundation stage, effective play based learning opportunities enables the pupils to develop their numeracy skills, and they engage well in real-life and imaginative activities. The pupils with profound learning and sensory needs have highly effective mathematical experiences embedded in their individual programmes. There is progression from effective play-based learning to well-conceived practical programmes enabling key stage four and five pupils to apply their learning in real-life contexts. The numeracy team are reviewing whole school teaching and assessment to better meet the wide-ranging and complex needs of the pupils.

- The teachers plan well for the development of the pupil's literacy skills with engaging activities that sustain their attention, through, for example, sensory stories. The pupils have a very good range of opportunities to develop their communication skills and appropriate emphasis is placed on the children's use of communication aids. While the reading scheme has been extended appropriately to give a greater range of materials, it requires further development so that a wider and more appropriate range of teaching strategies meet more effectively the broad range of ability.
- There are very effective arrangements for careers education advice and guidance and there are established links with a wide range of employers who provide suitable work experience placements. The school engages well with other relevant agencies, enabling school-leavers to secure placements in further education, training agencies or employment in line with their interests and capabilities.
- The quality of the provision for pastoral care is outstanding. The school celebrates thoroughly the achievements of pupils through weekly assemblies, and displays of their work and activities throughout the school. The pupils take active roles on the school council, and have been instrumental in the vision and planning for enhancements to the school facilities, including an all-weather sports pitch and the new sensory room. During meetings with inspectors, the pupils were confident in expressing their views in relation to their enjoyment of school life and displayed care and concern for each other. The pupils raise funds for schools in Africa, and for local charities. The working relationships throughout the school are particularly strong and supportive, and the nurture provision is of exemplary quality and highly effective in meeting the needs of the pupils experiencing social and emotional difficulties. The inclusive and welcoming ethos of the school has enabled pupils attending the co-located education other than at school (EOTAS) centre to study GCSE subjects within the school.
- The school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity thereby encouraging the pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. The catering staff plan effectively to meet the specific dietary requirements of pupils and there are ample opportunities to enjoy the sensory play areas. Senior pupils participate in sports events as individuals and as part of the school football team.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The senior leadership team has been restructured in the past two years. They are committed to the pastoral ethos of the school and enthusiastic about their areas of co-ordination. They meet regularly to discuss administrative and pastoral leadership issues to provide effective support and guidance to staff. A more strategic focus is required in order to monitor more effectively and collaboratively the quality of the learning and teaching on the outcomes for all of the pupils.

- The middle management teams are at differing stages of development, and some teams have recently been formed; consequently not all have yet developed action plans for the coming year. It will be important to build on the work that has begun in previous years and for all middle management teams to develop action plans that are focused, time-bound and relate directly to areas of the school development plan.
- The school development plan<sup>2</sup> has a very clear focus on improving the learning experiences of the children and action plans which enhance the quality of literacy and numeracy within the school have been prioritised. Staff development programmes have been closely aligned to the associated action plans. While there has been effective consultation with all stakeholders in relation to the development areas, the analysis of this consultation has not been included in the school development plan. In addition, the self-evaluations are not sufficiently robust to inform strategically the school development planning process.
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the parents, staff and school community can have a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated; the board of governors have a very effective working partnership with the principal and school staff. They are kept very well informed with presentations by staff who lead on aspects of the provision and provide balanced support and appropriate challenge for the school.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding pupils. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. During the inspection, the inspectors met with three separate groups of pupils. In discussions, the pupils spoke highly of their teachers and classroom assistants and the range of subjects and school activities they enjoy such as horse riding, sports and technology and design. The pupils stated that they feel safe and cared for in school and are aware of what to do if they have any worries about their safety or well-being.

## **8. Overall effectiveness**

Knockavoe School and Resource Centre demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will continue to monitor how the school sustains improvements in particular, the need to:

- monitor collaboratively and effectively the outcomes and provision for the broad range of ability and profile of need; and
- develop a more strategic approach at middle and senior leadership with an emphasis on robust processes for self-evaluation.

---

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

**Accommodation**

1. The current accommodation restricts the provision of sufficient and appropriate learning environments to support the extremely varied and incompatible needs of the pupils.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2017

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the ETI website: [www.etini.gov.uk](http://www.etini.gov.uk)