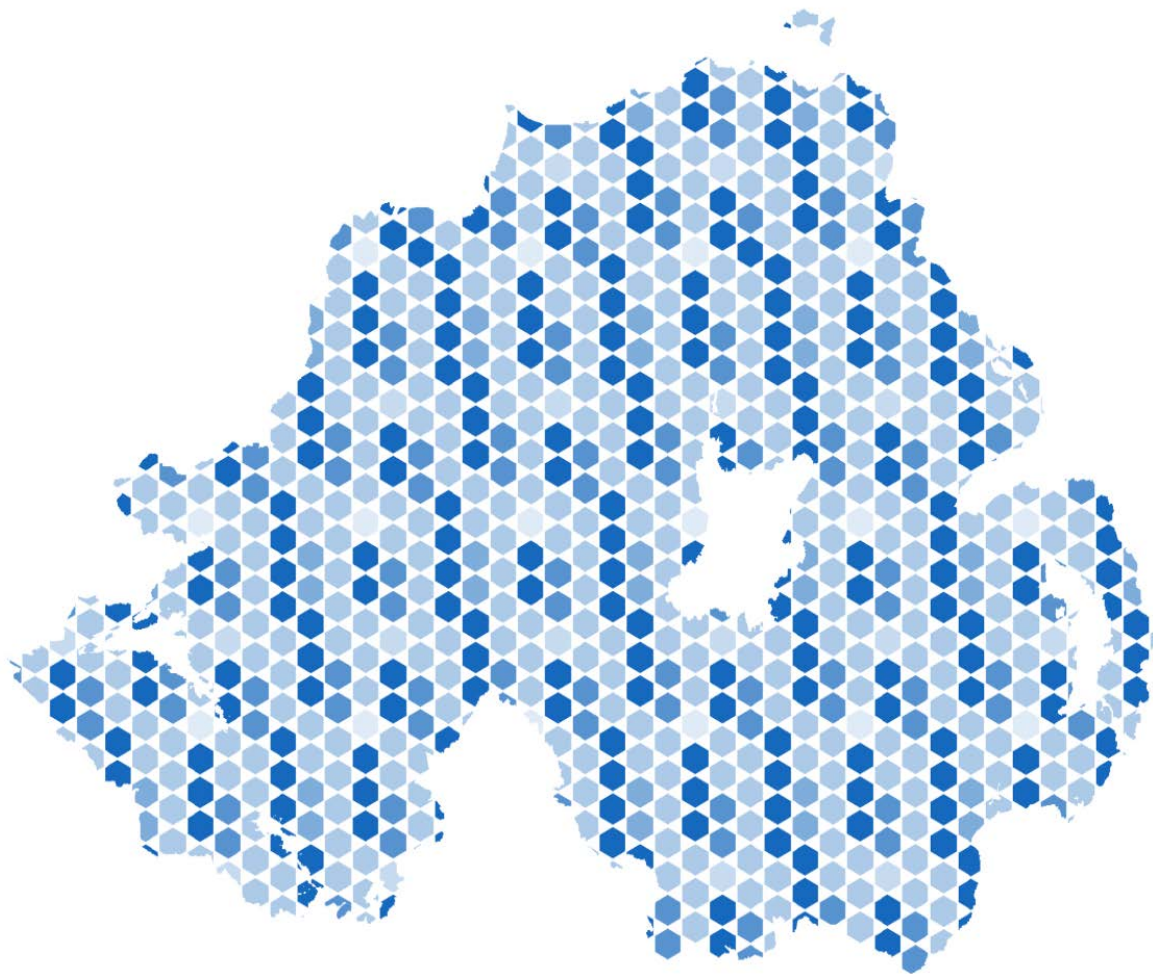


SPECIAL SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Longstone School, Dundonald,
Belfast

Report of an Inspection in
February 2016



Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



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 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 special 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-special-education.htm>

Inspectors observed learning and teaching, scrutinised documentation and the pupil's 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 a confidential questionnaire.

Four percent of parents (7) and forty-seven percent of staff (28) responded to the questionnaires. The parents who responded were very happy with the wide range of extracurricular activities, the support provided by the staff and the progress made by their children throughout their time in the school. A number of concerns raised regarding resources and behaviour management were discussed with the governors and senior leaders.

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

Longstone School provides education for pupils aged from four to sixteen years who have a range of complex learning difficulties. The principal has been in post for 18 months. The pupils travel from a wide catchment area within north County Down and the greater Belfast region. The school has nine classrooms in temporary accommodation. There are three units for behaviour support where up to six pupils from primary mainstream schools may be placed for twelve weeks, or up to four weeks longer according to individual need. The behaviour support teachers employ a system of working alternate days in the units and on outreach provision. The school provides outreach services for behaviour support and for moderate learning difficulties to primary schools in the Lisburn and north County Down area.

Longstone School	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Enrolment school	165	152	166	167
Enrolment outreach	90	90	90	82
Attendance percentage	87.5	88.5	86.3	N/A
FSME percentage ¹	49.1	46.71	56.63	58.68
Newcomers	*	*	*	*

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

N/A not available

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
Unit provision	Outstanding
Outreach provision	Outstanding

5. Achievements and outcomes

- The pupils are courteous, friendly and respectful in their interactions with staff and each other. They speak highly of their school and demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning contributing well to class discussions and enjoying the pair and group work activities. The pupils develop well their personal and social skills so that, by the time they leave school, they are confident in their social interactions with others.
- The behaviour of almost all the pupils is very good. The senior pupils are very good role models for the younger pupils and are fully involved in decisions about, and preparation for, their individual post-school pathways. Almost all of the pupils display very good skills for transition to appropriate placements which include: training and employment, post-16 special school provision and further education. All of the pupils maintain their placements in training, and further education colleges.
- By the time they leave the school, the pupils express themselves confidently and communicate very well with each other and with staff and visitors, enabling successful participation in a wide range of activities. They are able to use their skills in numeracy across a range of contexts within school and when on work placements. Record of achievement files chart the progression of each pupil throughout their primary department career and include certificates and photographs of their success in different areas of learning. The school needs to consider a similar record of attainment for the post-primary pupils.

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

- The pupils achieve very well in a range of external examinations which help them develop important independent living skills. Almost all of the pupils achieve a range of vocational and occupational qualifications including English and mathematics, Occupational Studies in Business Services, Environment and Society, and Design and Creativity. All of these courses are accredited by the Council for the Curriculum Examination and Assessment. The pupils gain qualifications in retail, catering, food safety, arts and crafts and digital imagery which, importantly, are linked to their future career plans. There is a need to develop further the curriculum so that the pupils can achieve qualifications in line with their ability and interests, and pupils who display high levels of anxiety can access non-examination courses.
- Almost all of pupils who access support in the behaviour units make very good progress, and by the time they transfer back to their own schools are able to settle to their work for increasing periods of time, interact appropriately with their peers, and use a range of effective self-management strategies for their behaviour. Almost all of the pupils who have completed placements in the behaviour support units go on to retain their places in mainstream primary schools.
- The pupils receiving support from Longstone outreach provision for behaviour make very good progress and almost all retain their placements in their primary schools. Those pupils receiving support for moderate learning difficulties in their mainstream schools make very good progress in literacy and numeracy. The schools concerned report successful outcomes for their pupils and an increased capacity of their staff to work with pupils experiencing similar difficulties.

6. Provision for learning

- Most of the teaching observed was good or better, with the majority being very good or outstanding. In the most effective lessons, the teachers provide sufficient and regular practical experiences, use skilful questioning to develop the pupil's thinking skills and oral responses, and well-planned differentiation enables appropriate support and challenge. There is variation in the planning for learning. In the best practice, the teacher's planning is comprehensive and informed well by the evaluation of the pupil's previous learning and knowledge of their individual needs. There are inconsistencies in teachers' planning in the post-primary department and it is appropriate that the school disseminates the effective practice to enable consistency.
- The pupils are involved in setting their individual education plan (IEP) targets; however there is a need to include the pupils' areas of strength. The school has identified that the system for recording, monitoring and reviewing the IEPs requires development. There are too many IEP targets, inappropriately matched success criteria and inconsistencies in how they are reviewed. In the most effective practice, the pupils are provided with opportunities to evaluate their own work and this practice needs to be embedded across the school. The assessment arrangements across the school are inconsistent and, appropriately, this is an area of focus in the school.

- In mathematics, the pupils are developing their knowledge through a variety of stimulating and practical activities which they enjoy. The pupils would benefit from increased opportunities to use mathematical language and, appropriately, this is a priority in the current action plan. The progression of numeracy across the schemes of work has been effectively tracked and areas for development identified. To develop the provision further, the school is conducting a whole school audit on numeracy.
- The school's programme for literacy enables very good progression as the pupils move through the school. The teachers provide a stimulating environment for literacy which promotes the development of the pupil's talking and listening, reading and writing at appropriate levels. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively to promote this important work. The successful integration of literacy across all areas of the curriculum and the use of meaningful contexts for learning are particular strengths of the KS3 and KS4 provision.
- The curriculum provision for senior pupils and leavers has a very appropriate and highly effective focus on employability skills and innovative careers education. The pupils benefit from up-to-date and relevant careers resources and are provided with opportunities to research career choices through the effective use of ICT. The school is supported well by local business and training organisations who provide information to the pupils and their parents; helping them to make appropriate career decisions. Purposeful links with the careers service, local further education providers and a wide range of training agencies enables successful pupil placements which meet very well their individual interests and capabilities. The senior pupils are able to discuss their career plans and the personal qualities, skills and qualifications required. The school has very good transition arrangements to prepare and support pupils when they leave to pursue further study or take up employment.
- The provision for the pupils in the units for behaviour support is highly effective. The staff support sensitively and skilfully the complex needs of the pupils. The planning, monitoring and evaluations of learning and behaviour are exemplary. The IEPs focus on the primary needs of the pupil and the targets are addressed consistently throughout the curriculum and school day. The pupils are taught and supported to recognise their feelings and to use successfully a range of strategies to manage their behaviour.
- The provision for the pupils receiving outreach support from Longstone literacy and numeracy support service is highly effective. Almost all of the primary schools receiving support for pupils engage very well with the support teachers, implement suggested strategies and resources consistently, and with success. The support teachers' planning, monitoring and evaluations are highly effective and demonstrate the very good progress of the pupils.

- The quality of the provision for pastoral care is outstanding. There is an inclusive ethos and nurturing environment that permeates all aspects of the school. The pupils respond positively to the high expectations of staff and, through the school council, have taken key roles in developing the new positive behaviour policy. The school celebrates the achievements of pupils through assemblies and the many displays in the school. The pupils are taught to care for others and have participated in a number of events to raise funds for a range of charities. During meetings with inspectors the pupils were articulate, confident and had great pride in their school. They spoke of the subjects they enjoyed in school and the additional support provided by teachers to enable them to make good progress in their learning.
- The school promotes healthy eating through the provision of fruit for primary aged pupils and through opportunities to try new and different foods from other countries to celebrate events such as the Chinese New Year. All of the senior pupils complete successfully food hygiene courses enabling them to work in the catering industry. The pupils are taught how to adopt healthy lifestyles and there are ample opportunities to participate in a wide range of sports teams and activities, and use the excellent outdoor gym in the school grounds.

7. Leadership and management

- The senior management team has developed a collegiate approach to the strategic development of the school, with regular meetings, consultation, and sharing of information to inform decision making. The roles of the senior leaders are clearly defined with each leader taking responsibility for significant areas within the school, including the curriculum, careers, safeguarding, and pastoral care. There is a need for the senior management to review the middle management structure and roles of responsibility to ensure a greater focus on leading effectively curriculum areas, and the progression of learning and outcomes of all the pupils.
- In the most effective practice observed, the middle management and co-ordinators have a clear understanding of their roles, and plan comprehensively for the progression of their area of responsibility. They have developed a thorough system to lead and plan strategically, which includes evaluating lessons, providing informed feedback to the teachers, and scrutiny of the pupils' work. This useful practice is inconsistent and there is a need for its dissemination amongst all middle management members to improve further the quality of pupil's learning.
- 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 provide challenge and advice to the principal, and each governor takes an active role in a wide variety of aspects of school management, including attaining the refurbishment of parts of the school building.

- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children and young people. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. During the inspection, the inspectors met with two 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. They stated 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.
- The current school development plan² and action plans are evaluated effectively by the school leadership team. The leadership team have begun appropriately widespread consultation and analysis of relevant data for the new school development cycle. Professional development for the teachers for writing the associated action plans has been arranged to ensure a clear focus on learning to raise further the pupil's attainments through better use of data and the most effective learning and teaching strategies.
- The uncertainty over the future of Longstone behaviour and support provision makes strategic planning for it by the school very difficult, despite this, the provision is managed skilfully by the principal.

8. Overall effectiveness

The school 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 improvement. In particular, the need to:

- develop a progressive and coherent system for planning and assessment throughout the school; and
- for the teachers to regularly evaluate learning in their classes to inform their lesson planning.

² The school development plan meets the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations. (Northern Ireland) 2010.

Accommodation

1. The older temporary classrooms are in a poor state of repair and are often cold. They are currently undergoing some renovation.

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