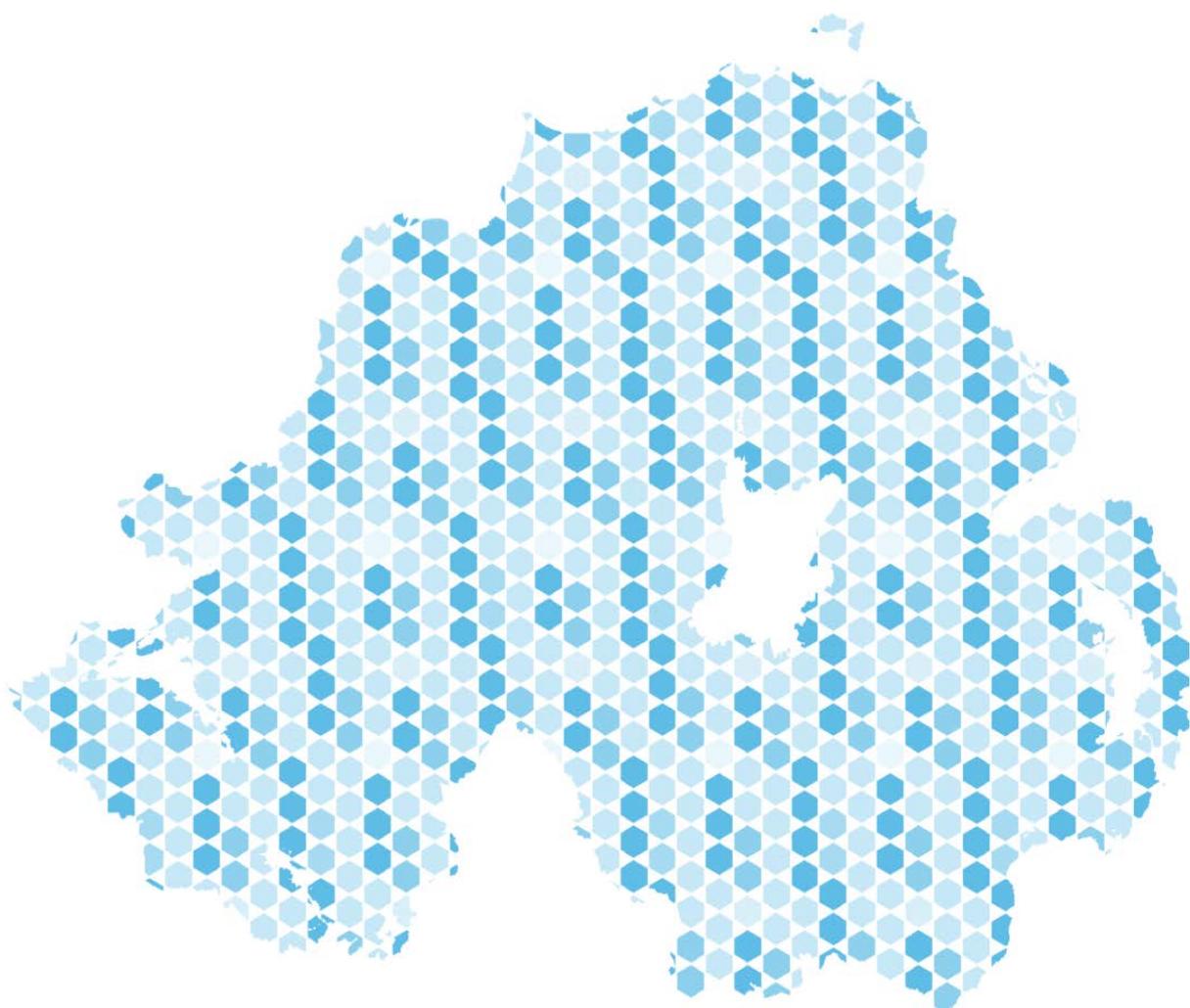


PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Steelstown Voluntary
Maintained Primary School and
Nursery Unit, Londonderry

Report of an Inspection in
March 2015

eti

*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*

Providing Inspection Services for

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

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



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 Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels in reports:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

Contents

Section	Page
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 standards	2
6. Provision	3
7. Leadership and management	4
8. Conclusion	5
Appendix	

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 Education and Training Inspectorate's (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 teaching and learning, 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 representative from the governors;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Eleven percent of the parents and 94% of staff responded to the questionnaires. The responses to the parental questionnaires indicated very high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted their appreciation of the staff's commitment to the school and the quality of the children's learning experiences. The staff responses were very positive; they emphasised the quality of the working relationships across the school and the links with the parents and wider community. ETI discussed with the principal and a representative of the board of governors the small number of issues emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

2. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

1. the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy, in particular, how the school is addressing low attainment and underachievement where applicable;
2. the quality of provision in the school and nursery unit; and
3. the quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

Steelstown Voluntary Maintained Primary School and Nursery Unit is situated in the Parish of Our Lady of Lourdes in the Shantallow East Ward of the Derry City Council Area. The enrolment of the school is currently 386 including 26 nursery children. Almost all of the children come from the local surrounding area. At the time of the inspection, 62% of the children in the primary school and nursery unit were entitled to free school meals (FSM) and 20.5% of the children had been identified by the school as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

Steelstown Voluntary Maintained Primary School	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	359	350	367	360
% Attendance	93.2	93.1	92.9	93.6
% Attendance for those children on the SEN Register	91.6	91.5	90.6	91.22
Percentage of pupils entitled to Free School Meals	52.3	58	58	59
% of children on SEN register	23.95	22.2	21.79	20.5
No. of children with statements of educational needs	7	8	14	13
No. of newcomers	*	*	0	0

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall Performance Level	Very Good
Achievements and Standards	Very Good
Provision	Very Good
Leadership and Management	Outstanding
Nursery Unit	Very Good

5. Achievements and standards

- Throughout the school, the children are highly motivated and demonstrate very good levels of engagement and enjoyment in their learning; their behaviour is exemplary. The children interact confidently with their teachers and demonstrate interest and skill in learning collaboratively through group and paired work; they respect and respond sensitively to the contributions of others. They are proud of their school. The children in key stage (KS) 1 and 2 demonstrate a willingness to take risks in their learning and to learn from their mistakes. The children in the nursery unit are well-settled, confident and relaxed, and spend extended periods in sustained and productive play.
- The school's performance data shows that most children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, achieve standards in English and mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation. Early intervention programmes enable children who require social and emotional support to become more independent and confident as they progress through KS1. At all stages, the children display increasing self-confidence and high levels of self-esteem.
- By year 7, the standards achieved by the children in literacy are very good. The most able children read with fluency and expression. They respond with insight to the novels and poetry they have read in class and discuss enthusiastically the fiction and non-fiction they choose to read for pleasure. Across all the key stages, the children contribute well to class discussions, talking with confidence about their learning. From year 2 onwards, almost all of the children produce high quality extended writing for a range of purposes and audiences, presented to a very high standard.

- The standards achieved by the children in numeracy, by year 7, are very good. The most able children demonstrate a good understanding of number, reasoning, shape and space and estimation, displaying flexibility in their thinking. They apply their mathematical understanding suitably in real and relevant contexts. In a minority of instances, there is insufficient challenge for the most able children, especially to develop further their problem-solving skills.
- The children in the nursery unit have developed high levels of natural curiosity. They co-operate well with the staff and collaborate well with their peers, listening with interest to stories, and explaining their thinking well when the adults pose questions. The children are self-reliant and self-managing in their work. A minority are developing well their early writing skills and can share their understanding of some key mathematical and scientific concepts using the appropriate vocabulary; overall, the children are making very good progress in all areas of the pre-school curriculum.
- Throughout the school the children make effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) using a range of devices and software competently to support their literacy and numeracy and other aspects of their learning.

6. Provision

- Planning, teaching and assessment were effective in promoting learning in most of the lessons observed. Where learning was most effective there was a sustained focus on the planned learning and the lessons were well-paced and purposeful. The teachers used questions effectively and provided very good opportunities for creative risk taking and active learning. The teachers mark the children's work regularly with supportive comments and appropriate awards which guide the children well in improving their work. In the less effective practice, in a minority of lessons, there was insufficient differentiation to meet the needs of all of the children.
- The agreed whole school planning for literacy, including the teaching of grammar and spelling, is coherent, thorough and promotes consistency and progression. In the most effective practice, literature, including the class novel, is used effectively as a stimulus for the development of oral and written communication skills. Opportunities to promote literacy through other curricular areas are utilised skilfully. In the foundation stage (FS), the play-based learning supports the children well in their development of oral communication and in their awareness of how sounds and words are represented in print. The taught curriculum is enriched by numerous events with a focus on literacy, including creative writing competitions, theatre company performances, library visits and the annual book fair.
- Most of the provision for mathematics is appropriately practical and the majority of the children acquire their skills and understanding progressively and systematically as they move through the key stages. Throughout the school, the mathematics lessons are often introduced with an effective mental mathematics session. In a majority of the mathematics lessons observed, an emphasis was placed on developing the children's mathematical language and the teachers used questioning and exposition effectively to help develop the children's thinking and understanding. The staff have identified appropriately the further development of problem-solving strategies and processes to extend the children's independent mathematical thinking skills.

- The nursery unit is presented to a high standard and contains a stimulating variety of play resources and materials both indoors and outdoors which are matched carefully to the children's stages of development, interests and individual needs. The staff plan an interesting and varied programme that provides appropriate challenge and progression for the children throughout the year. The quality of the interaction between the staff and the children is consistently of a high standard.
- Provision for children who require additional support with aspects of their learning is given a high priority throughout the school; they are supported very well through the very effective withdrawal support classes and reading partnership programme and by the skilful classroom assistants and teachers who know them well and plan carefully to meet individual needs. The children's learning is monitored and evaluated regularly to ensure progression and to reduce barriers to further progress and achievement. There is a strong commitment to inclusion and equality.
- The pastoral care provided by the school and nursery unit is very good. There is a culture of caring and respect for all and the quality of working relationships is excellent. The children's successes in all areas of school life are valued and celebrated and there is a range of extra-curricular activities that develop well their confidence and social skills. The nurture centre is very effective in supporting the social and emotional development of the children. Through the Eco Council, the views of the children are sought and they make a positive contribution to areas of school life which affect them directly.
- The school and nursery unit give very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity through, for example, the healthy eating policy and the range of sports and play activities provided for the children thereby encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The school's senior leadership team has a clear and realistic vision for the school and provides highly effective strategic leadership which promotes an effective team approach with the staff. The principal and vice-principal lead by example and are committed to meeting the needs of all the children and the wider community, setting high expectations for middle management and staff and for the children's all round achievements and development. This collaborative leadership style and a sharpened focus on the continuous improvement of all aspects of the school's provision have brought about improvement in the school's provision, standards, and learning and teaching.
- The co-ordinators are highly effective, and lead their teams very well. They have a clear and shared understanding of their roles and work collaboratively to develop clear links across the curriculum. They evaluate effectively the provision and the children's progress, through the monitoring of the teachers' planning and children's books and the analysis of data. In most areas of learning this informs future areas for development.

- The school improvement process is clearly linked to a well-constructed school development plan underpinned by rigorous self-evaluation and inclusive consultative processes with the whole staff, the children and the wider school community. These consultations, along with the effective analysis of relevant quantitative and qualitative data, are instrumental in the continuous improvement of the school's provision.
- The school and nursery unit have very effective links with the parents who are well-informed about their children's progress and the life and work of the school through, for example, the school newsletters. Parents are encouraged to support their children's learning through curriculum information events, as well as opportunities to come into the school and nursery and observe aspects of the play-based learning. The contribution of parent volunteers is a valuable part of the school's reading support provision. The school has established good links with a range of other schools, the local community and with various external support agencies to enhance further the children's learning opportunities.
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, ETI's evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are very well informed and engaged in the life and work of the school. They have a well-developed strategic overview of the school and understanding of the school's place within the local and wider community.
- 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 reported that they feel very secure in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their well-being.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school and nursery unit is very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the learners; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

Health and safety/accommodation

1. As a matter of urgency the WELB needs to review and address the school building compliance with statutory fire regulations.
2. It is appropriate that the WELB has begun a programme of minor works to address the accommodation defects which include the leaking roof, the windows and the availability of cold water in the classrooms. The inspection findings endorse the continuation of this work.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2015

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