

# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Academy Primary School and  
Nursery Unit, Saintfield,  
Co Down

Report of an Inspection in  
March 2014



Providing Inspection Services for

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



## 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

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## 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 representatives from the governors;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	263	77	29%	37
Teaching staff	21	16	76%	8
Teaching support staff	13	10	77%	*
Support staff	*	*	66%	*

\* fewer than 5.

The ETI is trialling a range of methods to collect the views of parents/carers and, as a result, the response rate may be low.

Almost all of the responses to the parental questionnaire indicated very high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the school's educational and pastoral provision. In the written comments, the parents highlighted the friendly and approachable staff and the opportunities the school provides for the children to participate in an extended range of learning experiences. The comments in the questionnaires were shared with the principal and the governors.

## 2. Context

Academy Primary School and Nursery Unit is situated in Saintfield, County Down. The children attend from the town and surrounding rural area. The current principal has been in the school for 21 years, having served 16 years as principal. The school's enrolment has risen slightly over the past 4 years and is presently 418, including 52 children in the nursery unit. Approximately 13% of the children are entitled to free school meals and 17% of the children require additional help with aspects of their learning. At the time of the inspection, the school was undergoing a programme of minor building works and two classes were operating temporarily in the library and computer room.

Academy Primary School and Nursery Unit	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Enrolment	399	412	406	418
% Attendance	96.7%	96.7%	97.1%	-
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	4.0%	6.4%	9.6%	13.4%
% (No) of children on SEN register	19.0%	20.0%	14.1%	16.7%
No. of children with statements of educational needs	8	10	6	13
No. of newcomers	0	0	0	0

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

### 3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

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

### 4. Overall finding

<b>Overall Performance Level</b>	<b>Very Good</b>
<b>Achievements and Standards</b>	<b>Very Good</b>
<b>Provision</b>	<b>Very Good</b>
<b>Leadership and Management</b>	<b>Very Good</b>
<b>Nursery Unit</b>	<b>Very Good</b>

### Key findings of the inspection

#### 5. Achievements and standards

- From the earliest stage in the nursery unit, the children have very good social skills and respond very well to the opportunities they are given to take risks in their learning and work independently. Throughout the key stages, the children are highly motivated and engage positively with all aspects of their learning. They work well collaboratively in pairs and in small groups and respect the opinions and ideas of others.

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

- An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data, in three<sup>2</sup> of the past four years, shows that the school's performance is consistently above or well above the Northern Ireland (NI) average in English and mathematics. Compared with schools in the same free school meals (FSM) category, the levels of attainment in English are above the average in two of the three years and in mathematics are above the average in one of the three years.
- The school's internal performance data indicates that almost all of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make very good progress in English and mathematics and are achieving standards in line with their ability or above expectation.
- The children express themselves articulately and communicate confidently with one another and adults. They write to a very good standard across a wide range of writing types. The most able children in years 4 and 7 read fluently and expressively; they report that they enjoy reading and can discuss a range of authors and personal reading preferences. By year 7, the children are secure in their knowledge of number facts and place value; they have a very good working knowledge of key concepts and are confident and flexible in their thinking across the areas of mathematics.
- The children in the nursery unit show very good levels of confidence and spend lengthy periods engaging in sustained and productive play. They produce representational work and model making of a very high standard. The children are making very good progress in all areas of the pre-school curriculum.
- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning make very good progress in line with their ability. They are included fully in the various learning activities within their classes and join in readily with their peers.
- By the end of key stage (KS) 2, almost all of the children make assured and skilled use of information communication technology (ICT), for example, to prepare presentations and leaflets and to research information for topic work.

## 6. Provision

- The quality of almost all of the learning and teaching ranged from good to outstanding; over two-thirds was very good or better with one-quarter overall evaluated as outstanding. In the most effective practice, the teachers build progressively on the children's previous learning using effective prompts and questioning strategies. They make timely use of the children's responses to engage the children actively in their learning and deepen their understanding. These lessons take due account of the children's varying needs, incorporate a clear sense of enjoyment and are set in meaningful contexts of interest and relevance to the children.

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<sup>2</sup> Due to the current transition period in the arrangements for statutory assessment, this analysis of the end of KS2 performance data is based on the outcomes up to but not including the 2012/13 school year.

- Overall, the school's literacy and language programme ensures good progression throughout the key stages. In the nursery unit, the quality of the interaction between the staff and the children is consistently of a very high standard. Well-planned guided reading sessions are used effectively in the foundation stage and KS 1 to develop the children's understanding of grammar and punctuation in context. This very good practice needs to be adopted more consistently as the children progress through KS2, in order that the children's learning about key aspects of language links more holistically and meaningfully with their learning experiences in reading and writing.
- The school's mathematics programme is comprehensive and provides for balanced coverage and very good progression across the processes in mathematics, number, measures, shape and space and handling data. Mental mathematical activities are used as challenging introductions to lessons, and the children are developing very well their ability to explain their mental strategies using appropriate mathematical language. The teachers make adept use of a range of high-quality practical resources to hold the children's mathematical curiosity and to develop further their understanding of concepts and problem-solving skills. Across the key stages, Information and communication technology (ICT) is integrated effectively into the learning activities to support, enrich and extend the children's learning.
- The children who require additional help with aspects of their learning benefit from a well-balanced combination of withdrawal interventions and in-class support. The nursery unit and school maintain effective links with a varied range of external agencies and the parents in supporting the children's needs. The classroom assistants contribute significantly to the children's learning and development both within the classes and in the additional support programmes. In reviewing the individual education plans, the school needs to make sure that the children's learning targets and the associated strategies are realistic.
- The staff in the nursery unit plan an interesting programme that provides appropriate challenge and progression for the children. In the primary classes, the teachers' planning is comprehensive and provides clear guidance for their work with the children. The children's written work is always marked conscientiously and supportively. Where this is most effective, the teachers provide age appropriate guidance for the children on how to improve their work further.
- The school's arrangements for pastoral care are outstanding. A highly supportive child- and community-centred ethos influences and permeates all aspects of the school's provision. The children's behaviour throughout the school, including in the nursery unit, is exemplary. The children respond very positively to the broad range of extra-curricular opportunities which their teachers provide to enrich and extend their learning further; they thrive on the school's motivating strategies and arrangements for rewarding their efforts and achievements and enabling their active participation in the decision-making processes about important aspects of school life.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting a healthy lifestyle through the curriculum and through the varied range of extra-curricular physical activities on offer in the school.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The leadership and management provide effective strategic leadership and set ambitious and achievable goals for the school's ongoing development. The principal inspires confidence among the staff, children and parents; he is ably supported by the vice-principal, the senior leadership team and co-ordinators who are empowered to lead and manage their areas of responsibility cohesively. Together with the rest of the staff team, they maintain a clear focus on the continuous improvement of all aspects of the school's provision.
- The school operates well-embedded processes for self-evaluation leading to improvement; these procedures make very good use of a wide range of qualitative and quantitative data to identify and set suitable targets. As a consequence, the key priorities of the school development plan concentrate appropriately on improving further the quality of the children's learning experiences and the standards that they attain.
- The school and the nursery unit have effective arrangements in place for communicating with the parents about their children's learning. The leadership and staff teams have purposeful and mutually beneficial links with the local and wider community that develop further the children's educational opportunities.
- The governors support and challenge the principal and staff conscientiously in implementing and evaluating the impact of the school development plan (SDP). They are very involved in the work of the school; the co-ordinators present to the governors the developments in their respective areas of responsibility. 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.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school and nursery unit have comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. During the inspection, the inspectors met with a group of children from year 6. They expressed that they feel very safe and secure in school and are clear about who to speak to if they have any concerns. The children conversed very openly and enthusiastically about all aspects of school life.

## **8. Conclusion**

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



**Health and safety**

- There is traffic congestion due a lack of appropriate car parking facilities at the school. This presents safety concerns during drop-off and collection times for the children.

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