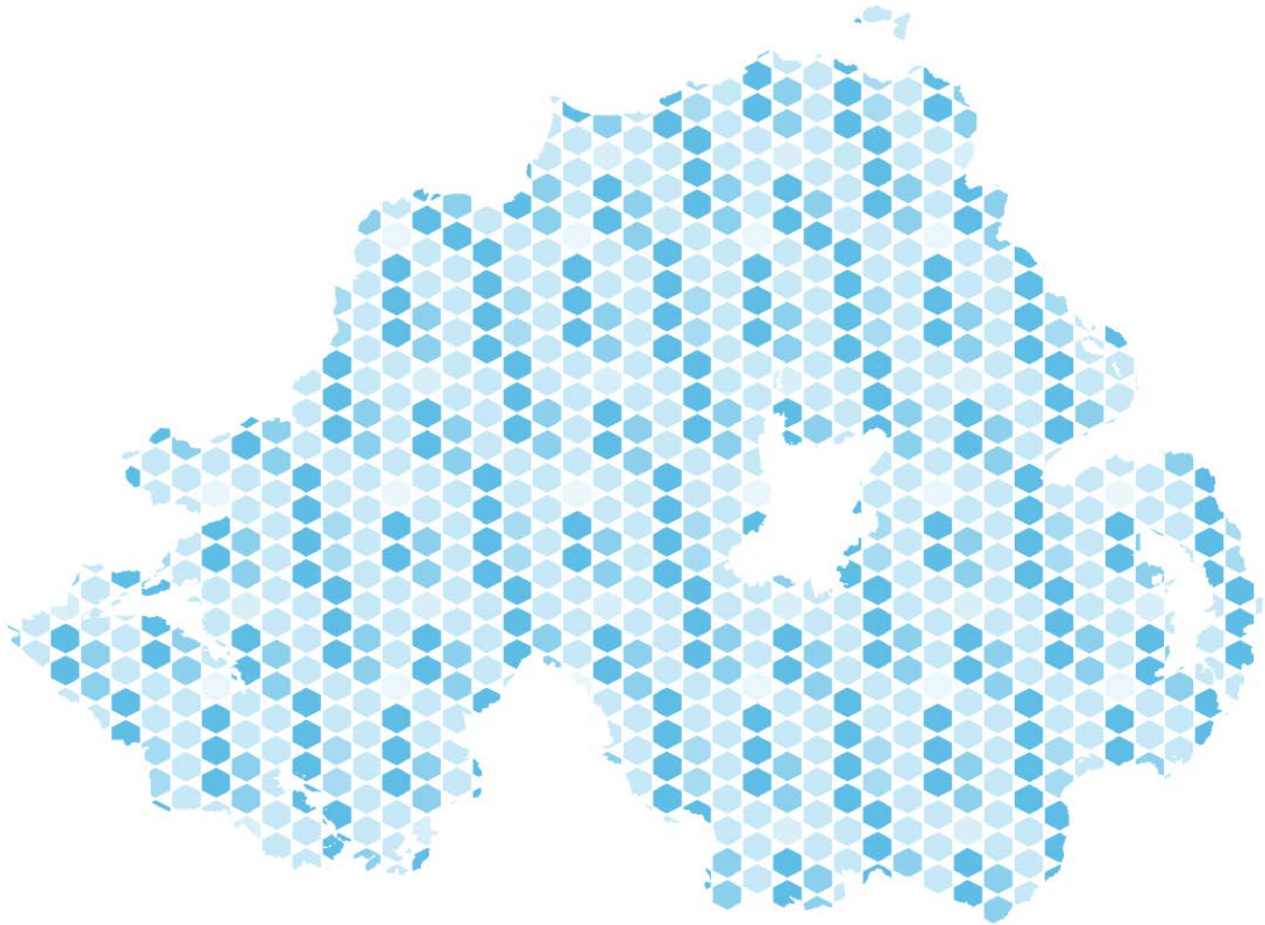


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

The Good Shepherd Primary
School, Belfast

Report of an Inspection in
April 2016



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing Inspection Services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
Department for Communities

CUSTOMER
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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 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 the 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 primary 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-primary.htm>.

Inspectors observed learning and teaching, 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.

Five percent of parents and 71% of staff responded to the questionnaires. The responses to the parental questionnaire were very positive. In particular, the parents highlighted their appreciation of the teachers' and support staff's care for the children and the positive impact of the newly-appointed principal. The responses to the staff questionnaire were also very positive; they endorsed, in particular, the calm, effective leadership of the new principal and the recent opportunities made available to them for continuing professional development. The ETI has reported to the principal and representatives of the board of governors the small number of minor issues emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

2. Focus of inspection

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

- children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy; including how the school is addressing low attainment and underachievement where applicable;
- quality of provision for learning in the school; and
- quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

The Good Shepherd Primary School is a maintained primary school situated on the outskirts of West Belfast and draws most of its children from the Poleglass area. The enrolment has remained steady in recent years and the school intake is over-subscribed for the coming year. The numbers of children entitled to free school meals and on the special needs register have remained broadly consistent over the past four years. The school has a nurture room and two social communication classes. The principal took up post in September 2015 and there have been recent changes in curriculum leadership.

The Good Shepherd Primary School	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Enrolment	312	314	301	305
% Attendance	92.0	93.0	92.7	N/A
% NI Primary school average	94.9	95.6	95.4	N/A
% Attendance for those children on the SEN Register	91.5	91.2	91.5	N/A
Percentage of pupils entitled to Free School Meals	74.0	73.2	74.1	72.5
% of children on SEN register	28.2	28.3	28.2	27.9
No. of children on SEN register	88	89	85	85
No. of children with statements of educational needs	8	6	13	17

Source: data as held by the school.
N/A not available

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Important areas for improvement
Achievements and standards	Good
Provision for learning	Good
Leadership and management	Important areas for improvement

5. Achievements and standards

- The children's behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. They are courteous and kind to each other and to the adults in the school. They demonstrate positive dispositions for learning, engaging with interest and enthusiasm in the collaborative and independent learning experiences provided for them. When given the opportunity, in a minority of lessons and in particular at key stage 2 (KS2) the children demonstrate the ability to reflect on and discuss their learning with maturity. The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are well-integrated, happy and demonstrate exemplary behaviour.
- The school's internal data indicates that almost all of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, achieve in line with their ability or above expectation in English and mathematics.
- Across the key stages, when given the opportunity, most of the children demonstrate good talking and listening skills, contributing confidently to discussions, reading aloud and sharing their ideas openly. In all classes the children are developing their understanding of the features of different written forms through a variety of ways of writing. By Year 7, a majority of the children have a good grasp of grammar and how language may be manipulated and enhanced to improve their writing further.

- The children enjoy reading and draw upon a range of strategies to attempt unfamiliar words and make meaning in a variety of texts, including, at KS2 the study of more challenging novels. By year 7, the most able children read with high levels of interest and good understanding. When prompted, they can explain more complex words and phrases, make inferences, justify their views with textual evidence and talk enthusiastically about the books they read for pleasure.
- By the end of KS2, the most able children demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of all the areas of mathematics. They can complete calculations accurately and are confident in their use of mathematical language and in their mathematical reasoning.
- In only a minority of lessons observed do the children use information and communication technology (ICT) with confidence and independence to extend and exhibit their learning through, for example, the use of websites for research and consolidation, and desktop publishing.

6. Provision for learning

- In almost all of the lessons observed, the learning environment was welcoming and working relationships were of a high quality. In the effective practice, in most of the lessons observed, the learning experiences provided for the children were engaging, and provided appropriately differentiated, purposeful opportunities for them to work together to discuss and to progress their learning. The teachers used questioning effectively to deepen the children's thinking and to extend their oral responses. Lessons were appropriately paced and an effective plenary consolidated the learning. In a minority of lessons, the planning did not focus adequately on learning: there was over-direction by the teacher resulting in the children being unduly passive and in missed opportunities to challenge them further in their learning. The children's work is marked regularly and supportively but there is some variation in how effectively the marking focuses on enabling the children to improve their work further. Across the school the use of ICT to support learning and teaching is underdeveloped, in particular at foundation stage.
- The school is committed to meeting the needs of the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning. The nurture room is a significant strength of the provision for special needs and is sector-leading in its practice. Established in 2006, it is rigorous in selecting the children most in need and best suited to benefiting from the approach. The individual education plans (IEPs) for these children are exemplary, with bespoke targets that are highly refined and reviewed regularly. Monitoring and evaluation of children's progress and communication with parents is robust. Reintegration of the children into mainstream classes is skilfully and sensitively managed and highly successful. The progress of the children is tracked throughout their remaining years at the school and the tracking demonstrates that these children achieve in line with their peers.

- The social communication classes, introduced in the school in 2014 and 2015 respectively, for children with very complex social and communication difficulties, are an important addition to the special educational provision and a further key strength of the school. The classes are helping the children to overcome significant barriers to their learning and are providing a critical level of support unavailable elsewhere in the community. The approaches to monitoring and evaluating the children's progress are not consistent across the classes: it will be important to implement an effective system in order to establish the impact of this provision in the medium to long term and to ensure that the children are reintegrated into mainstream classes as appropriate.
- In the mainstream school, there is effective literacy intervention in place for a number of targeted children, and within lessons the classroom assistants provide very good support. The approach to monitoring the progress of children who require additional support with their learning is not rigorous enough; reviewing the approach to IEPs at whole-school level, informed by the existing effective practice within the school, and increasing the involvement of parents and learners in the process, is needed.
- Most of the teaching observed was effective in developing progressively the children's literacy skills. In the effective lessons, including some examples of outstanding practice, the teachers provide well-planned learning activities, which engage and challenge the children and promote and extend their thinking skills. The teachers plan opportunities for the children to develop their writing in a number of forms, including reports, narrative and persuasive and, as a result, the children produce good quality extended writing. In a minority of instances, where the practice needs to improve further, there is an over-reliance on writing frames and worksheet activities, and the children do not have adequate opportunity to transfer their skills and write in contexts across the curriculum. The school has identified appropriately the need to monitor more effectively the impact of the planning for literacy on the children's experiences and progress. Across the school, an appropriate range of reading strategies, including at KS2, the detailed study of novels, ensures that the children acquire the core reading skills well.
- Most of the mathematics lessons observed were effective in promoting learning, including some examples of outstanding practice; the quality of the children's learning experiences observed was not wholly consistent. In the most effective practice, the teachers use a variety of strategies, ask open-ended questions to challenge the children's thinking and provide appropriately differentiated tasks that meet well the range of individual needs within the classroom. The teachers provide the children with real-life context for mathematics and promote their mathematical language and understanding in other areas of the curriculum. The inspection evidence identified inconsistencies in the planning of the mathematical provision. The newly-appointed mathematics co-ordinator has identified appropriately the need to plan for a greater balance in coverage of all areas of mathematics within and across the key stages in order to ensure consistency in the year-on-year progression in the children's learning.

- At foundation stage, effective play-based learning provides very good opportunities for the children to promote and develop mathematical awareness and language and to consolidate learning across the curriculum. The teachers build on the provision, by increasing the use of outdoor facilities, in order to expand the range of valuable opportunities for the children to develop their oral and written communication skills.
- The pastoral care of the children is a significant strength of the school. The teachers and learning support staff understand the children well and are proactive in their approach to identifying and addressing potential barriers to learning. The presence of the nurture room and social communication classes benefits the atmosphere of understanding, nurture and care in the school as a whole. The children's development is supported by the school's positive behaviour management policy and their achievements are recognised and celebrated through the new whole-school rewards system. The school has excellent relationships with a range of external agencies which further support the staff in meeting effectively the needs of the children.
- In addition, the extra-curricular programme, including the morning handball club, the very successful school choir and the range of after school clubs, for example, GEM (Going the Extra Mile), Gaelic football and soccer and the opportunity to learn Irish, all enrich and extend the children's learning experiences. Through their engagement with the recently established student council and playground buddy scheme, as well as the year 7 peer play programme, the children undertake leadership roles and contribute meaningfully to the improvement of their school.
- The school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, through the breakfast club, the healthy break policy and a range of extra-curricular sporting activities which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- Throughout the school, the roles and responsibilities of a number of the senior leaders and co-ordinators are not sufficiently well developed. The literacy co-ordinator and the newly-appointed numeracy co-ordinator, however, have a clear vision for their roles and the recently-appointed principal has made a positive start to developing distributed leadership. Appropriate professional development is being undertaken and the school is increasing the capacity of the senior leaders and co-ordinators, thereby enabling them to undertake more effectively their roles in promoting improvement across the school. The inspection findings endorse the need for this important work and the progress being made.
- The current school development plan¹, which is in its final year of a three-year cycle, has not been informed by effective evaluation and consultation processes and does not provide strategic direction for school improvement. Appropriately, processes have recently been established for consulting with the children, parents and staff to inform future planning for improvement. The principal has begun to address the need to make more effective use of the school's internal data and other sources of first-hand evidence in the whole-school improvement process. As a result, more suitable interim action plans have been produced.

¹ The school development plan is partially compliant with the requirements of the School Development Planning Regulations (NI) 2010.

- The school has well-established and effective relationships with the main contributory pre-school provider in order to help children settle into the school. There is good communication with local post-primary schools in order to ensure that the children are well prepared for moving to the next stage. Communication with parents and the wider community has improved significantly through the recently-initiated 'Reaching Out' programme, including a weekly newsletter for parents, an open morning and a school website.
- The board of governors has been recently re-constituted and comprises members with a variety of expertise and an appropriate understanding of their support and challenge function. Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, ETI's evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. It is important to ensure that the newly-ratified governors receive the planned safeguarding training. In discussions with the inspectors, the children in year 6 reported that they are happy and secure in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their well-being.

8. Overall effectiveness

Good Shepherd Primary School needs to address the following important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners, which are:

- to continue to build the capacity of the senior leaders and co-ordinators to develop effective leadership and teamwork;
- to monitor and evaluate effectively the impact of improvements in the children's experiences on their learning outcomes; and
- to share and embed more consistently the effective practice within the school.

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 in 18-24 months.

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