

# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Fair Hill Primary School and  
Nursery Unit, Dromara,  
County Down

Controlled, co-educational

Report of an Inspection in  
May 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
and other commissioning Departments



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## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Context

Fair Hill Primary School and Nursery Unit is a controlled, co-educational primary school in the village of Kinallen, County Down. Most of the children attending the school and nursery unit come from the surrounding area. The full-time, single class nursery unit is in the grounds of the primary school. The school's Eco-Club has received its fifth Green Flag and gained recently the high-level status of Eco-Schools Ambassador for Energy.

The school and nursery unit have well-established collaborative links for shared education with a local, maintained primary school and nursery unit; the children benefit from joint lessons focusing on STEM<sup>1</sup> activities and the further development of their thinking skills and personal capabilities.

Fair Hill Primary School	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Primary School enrolment	300	302	310	307
Nursery unit enrolment	26	26	26	26
% School attendance	97.8	97.6	97.7	N/A
% NI Primary school average	95.6	95.4	N/A	N/A
FSME Percentage <sup>2</sup>	17.3	18.2	14.8	15.6
No. of children on SEN register	56	59	54	54
% of children on SEN register	18.6	19.5	17.4	17.7
No. of children with statements of educational need	7	5	7	7
No. of newcomer children	*	*	*	*

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

\* fewer than 5

N/A not available

### 2. Views of parents and staff

Twenty-three percent of parents and most of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaires. The responses to the parental questionnaire acknowledged high levels of satisfaction with almost all aspects of the life and work of the school. The parents highlighted their appreciation of the high quality of care provided for the children and the hard working, approachable staff. Almost all of the responses to the staff questionnaire were affirmative; the written comments indicated that the members of staff enjoy working together as a team in the school; they emphasised the strong sense of community in the school and the very good working relationships at all levels. The ETI has reported to the principal and a representative of the board of governors the main issues emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

<sup>1</sup> STEM science, technology, engineering and mathematics

<sup>2</sup> The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of children entitled to free school meals.

### 3. Focus of the inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all children, the inspection linked internal and external approaches to evaluate the:

- outcomes for children with a particular focus on numeracy and literacy including across the curriculum and how the school is addressing low attainment and underachievement;
- quality of provision with a particular focus on numeracy and literacy including across the curriculum and the nursery unit; and
- quality of leadership and management.

### 4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Outcomes for learners	Good
Quality of provision	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Nursery Unit	Very good

## KEY FINDINGS

### 5. Outcomes for learners

- The children have a positive attitude towards literacy and attain good outcomes. Their talking and listening skills are well developed; they are articulate and keen to express their views. The children in year 7 are enthusiastic and competent readers; they read with good levels of fluency and intonation and give personal views on the books they enjoy. The presentation of the children's written work is good; they write for a variety of purposes and develop well their individual writing styles. The children have opportunities to apply their writing skills to other areas of the curriculum; however, the quality and extent of their writing is, at times, limited due to the overreliance on worksheets and close procedures.
- The children's standards in numeracy are good. They have a good mathematical awareness and engage well in their learning during purposeful activities. By the end of key stage (KS) 2, the children show a good understanding in number and articulate well the strategies they use to solve problems in mathematics. During problem-solving activities, the most able children in year 7 display a good knowledge of the key mathematical concepts. They can select relevant strategies and apply their mathematical skills to solve the challenges set for them. The children are less confident with the mathematical concepts and the associated language related to shape and space, and measures.
- There is a whole-school approach to tracking the progress of individual children including those identified as requiring additional support. The children's work reflects a broad range of differentiated activities across the key areas of literacy and numeracy; the children's needs and abilities are well met.

- In the nursery unit, the children's all round development and progress in all areas of the pre-school curriculum is very good. The children settle very well to their work; they are independent and confident to self-manage the routines of the day. Their attention and listening skills are well developed and they enjoy taking part in story, singing and rhyme sessions. The children can sort independently and make comparisons related to shape and number, and they develop effectively their use of early language and mathematical concepts through play.
- The children are courteous, well behaved and engage positively in their learning. They are respectful of their teachers and each other and show high levels of interest, motivation, engagement and enjoyment in their class work. Across all classes, the children listen attentively, settle quickly to their tasks, and work well in pairs and small groups. They can self-manage and undertake a range of roles, building on their confidence and self-esteem.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used to good effect across the curriculum. The children are confident and competent in a wide range of ICT skills to enhance their learning.

## 6. Quality of provision

- The quality of the planning, learning, teaching and assessment is good. The teachers collaborate well to ensure consistency in the quality of the learning the children experience across the curriculum. The children access a broad and balanced curriculum; the school's cross-curricular planning through topic work is used to good effect to integrate literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. Almost all of the lessons observed were good in progressing learning and a significant minority were very good and outstanding. The teachers take good account of the children's prior knowledge and plan differentiated lessons in meaningful contexts that build on the children's interests, needs and experiences.
- The programme for literacy ensures appropriate progression in talking, listening, reading and writing. The children enjoy literacy and the teachers use effectively a wide range of open-ended tasks to engage the children in their learning, extend their thinking and develop their understanding. They access a good range of enrichment activities, such as, visits to the local library, book fairs and 'World Book Day', which encourage and support their interest in reading and writing. The long-term planning and whole school overview for literacy are under developed.
- The programme for numeracy covers all the areas of the mathematics curriculum and facilitates well the progression of the children's numeracy skills. The programme for mental mathematics has a positive influence in extending the children's thinking in numeracy. The mathematics provision, however, lacks sufficient opportunities for the children to consolidate further their skills in measures, shape and space and processes.

- In the foundation stage, the play provision offers many good opportunities for developing learning across the curricular areas. The quality of the staff interaction is, however, variable resulting in missed opportunities to develop incidental literacy and numeracy learning arising from the play activities. The children's prior learning experiences in the nursery unit are not built on well enough in the foundation stage curriculum.
- The learning environment in the nursery unit is well-organised and the teachers plan stimulating activities to meet the needs and interests of the children. The staff interaction is highly skilful in developing the children's learning. They are responsive to the needs of the children during play and use open-ended questions to extend the children's understanding and thinking skills. The children with additional needs are identified early for behavioural or speech and language support and the use of an appropriate range of strategies by the staff enables the children to make very good progress.
- The provision for the children who require additional support for learning is highly effective. The children's' needs are identified accurately at an early stage; the school's internal data, individual education plans and evidence folders demonstrate that the intervention programmes in place are impacting positively on the children's learning experiences and the outcomes they achieve. The classroom assistants, through well-planned withdrawal and in-class support, provide effective support for these children.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school's approach to the care and welfare of the children impacts positively on learning, teaching and outcomes. The children have well-planned opportunities to develop and progress their social, organisational and leadership skills through the Eco-council, the school council, peer mediation and the playground 'buddy system.'

## **7. Leadership and management**

- Overall, the quality of leadership and management is good. The senior leaders and co-ordinators work collegially to lead on key areas of school improvement. The school development plan guides well the work of the school; it is informed through appropriate consultation with the children, parents, staff and governors.
- The associated action plans lack clarity regarding the quantitative targets and need to be based on a more robust analysis of the school's extensive range of internal and external data, in order to measure the impact of the actions identified through the improvement planning process. The senior leaders' approaches to monitoring and evaluation are not rigorous enough to ensure evaluative and timely feedback to co-ordinators regarding the effectiveness and impact of their work.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are committed fully to the school. They have a good range of complementary skills which enables them to carry out their roles effectively. To develop further their knowledge of the curriculum developments and actions to promote improvement, the governors have identified appropriately the need to enhance communication and develop further links with the key post holders in the school.

- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The children report that they feel safe in the school and that they are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or welfare.

## **8. Overall effectiveness**

Fair Hill Primary School and Nursery Unit demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners.

There is an area for improvement that the school has demonstrated the capacity to address.

The area for improvement is:

- the action planning process requires clearer quantitative targets which are informed through the school's analysis of data, to measure the progress and impact of the planned actions.

The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.

### Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the ETI website: [The Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework \(ISEF\): Effective Practice and Self-Evaluation Questions for Primary | Education Training Inspectorate](#)

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

## Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

### 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 ETI use the following performance levels when reporting on outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management<sup>3</sup>:

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 in 12 to 18 months.
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 in 18 to 24 months.

<sup>3</sup> And the overall provision in a subject area or unit, as applicable.

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