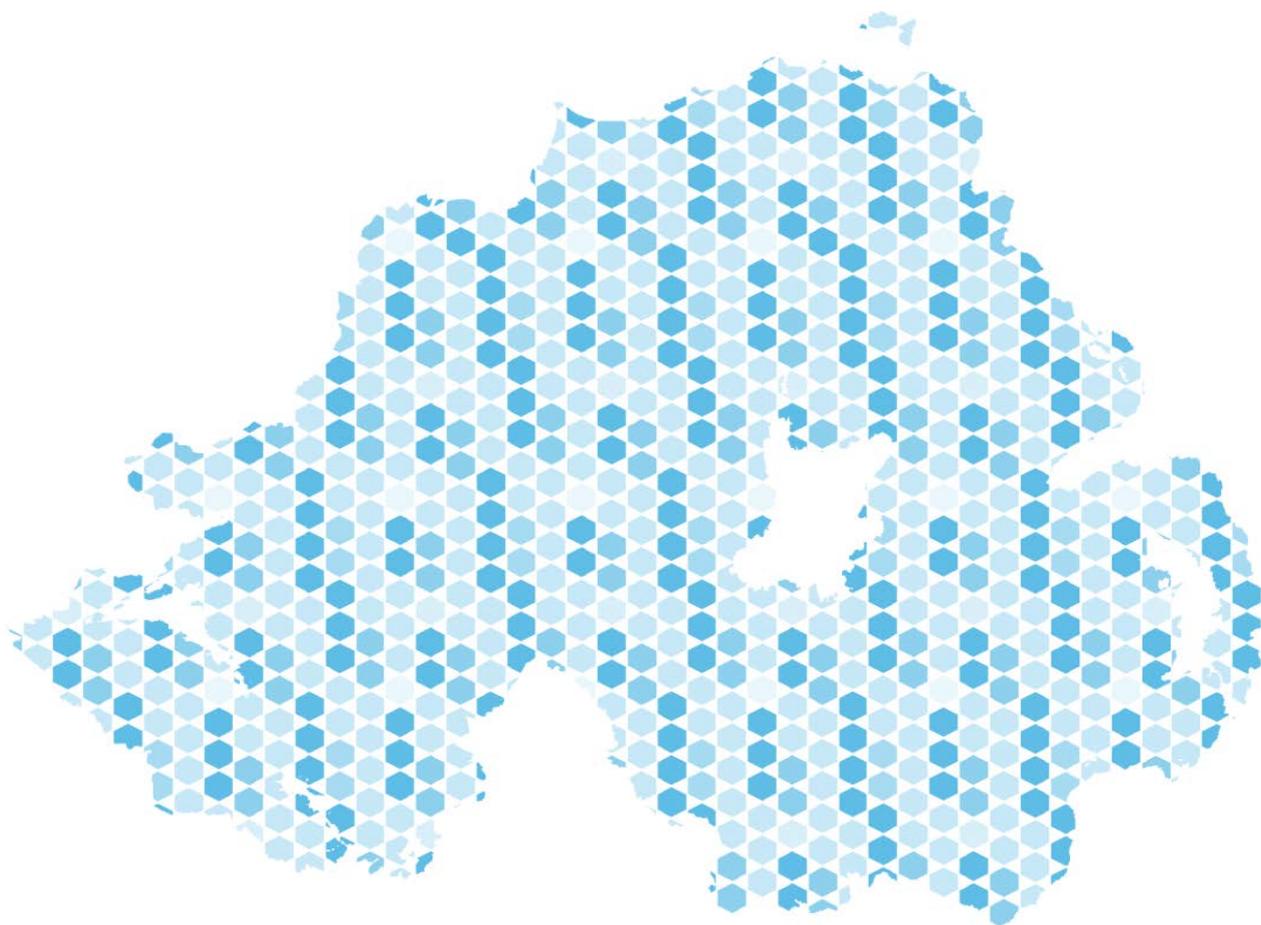


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Joseph's Primary School and  
Nursery Unit, Carryduff, 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



## 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.

# Contents

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
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 for learning	3
7. Leadership and management	5
8. Overall effectiveness	6

## **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 confidential questionnaires.

Sixteen percent of parents and 76% of staff responded to the questionnaires. The responses to the parental questionnaire indicated extremely high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents expressed their praise for the leadership of the principal, the hard work of the staff and the very high quality of the pastoral provision. The responses to the staff questionnaire were wholly positive; the staff emphasised their enjoyment in working in the school, the collegial nature of the learning environment and the highly effective leadership of the principal. The ETI has discussed with the principal and the chair of the board of governors the very positive responses and comments reported through the questionnaires.

## **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 including the nursery unit; and
- quality of leadership and management.

## **3. Context**

St Joseph's Primary School and Nursery Unit is a maintained, co-educational primary school situated in Carryduff. Almost all of the children attending the school come from the immediate area. The enrolment has remained steady and stands currently at 410, with an additional 60 children in the nursery unit. The school demonstrates its commitment to shared education through its longstanding and extensive links with a number of local controlled schools. The school is justly proud of its recent recognition as a Digital School of Distinction.

St Joseph's Primary School	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Enrolment	392	398	412	410
% Attendance	96.9	97.75	97.01	97.6
% Attendance for those children on the SEN Register	96	96.5	95.5	96.2
Percentage of pupils entitled to Free School Meals	6.3	4.7	7.8	6
No of children on SEN register	57	55	56	67
% of children on SEN register	14.5	13.8	13.6	16.3
No. of children with statements of educational needs	10	6	8	10
No. of newcomers	7	5	6	7

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

#### 4. Overall findings of the inspection

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
<b>Achievements and standards</b>	Outstanding
<b>Provision for learning</b>	Outstanding
<b>Leadership and management</b>	Outstanding
<b>Nursery Unit</b>	Outstanding

#### 5. Achievements and standards

- The children's attitudes, dispositions and wider skills are outstanding. The children are confident and self-assured; they exhibit very high levels of politeness, respect and courtesy to all and their behaviour is exemplary. The children have high expectations of themselves; they engage fully and pro-actively in the learning process, display very good levels of perseverance and resilience and confidently take risks for learning. As they move through the school, the children become increasingly independent and develop very well as informed and responsible decision-makers, ready for the next stage of their learning.
- The school's internal performance data shows that almost all of the children, including those who require additional support in aspects of their learning, make progress in English and mathematics and achieve in line with their ability or above expectation.
- Almost all of the children in the school can express themselves in an articulate and mature manner; they are at ease working together in group and paired activities and respond readily and enthusiastically in whole class discussions where the teachers' effective questioning skilfully elicits their extended oral responses. The standard of the children's written work is very high, as evidenced by the work in their books and in the displays that celebrate the children's work and help create the literacy rich learning environment. By the end of key stage (KS) 2, the children read with accuracy, confidence and importantly, with an expressiveness that reveals comprehension and empathy; this demonstrates clearly the very high level of their reading prowess.

- In mathematics, the children contribute enthusiastically to well-planned practical tasks and can competently explain the mathematical reasoning associated with their work. As they progress through the school, the children extend their mathematical skills and vocabulary appropriately. The children embrace the many opportunities to apply their knowledge and understanding to investigative and problem-solving activities and to develop an appreciation of the importance of mathematics in everyday life. By the end of KS 2, the children display great flexibility in their approach to mental calculations, are highly confident in their understanding of mathematical language and can apply very well their mathematical knowledge and understanding in a range of contexts.
- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning make very good progress in line with the targets in their individual education plans. The children benefit very well from the high quality of the support programmes provided and demonstrate sustained progress in their learning.
- The children in the nursery unit are very well settled and are making excellent progress in all aspects of their learning and development. They can concentrate on play activities over sustained periods of time and show imagination and creativity in their use of materials during art activities. The children make very good, independent use of the wide range of books available in the playroom and they engage well in early writing experiences. The work they produce is of a very high standard. The children display a natural curiosity for the world around them and are beginning to ask questions and problem-solve through play. They talk with confidence about their learning using appropriate topic-related vocabulary, play readily with others, share materials and communicate effectively with each other.
- Across the key stages, the children are extremely confident in their use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a learning tool. There is clear progression in the children's knowledge and understanding of ICT, the development of their skills and their ability to use ICT in a variety of contexts.

## **6. Provision for learning**

- All of the lessons observed during the inspection were effective in promoting learning; just under two-fifths of the lessons were very good, while three-fifths were outstanding. This excellent classroom practice was characterised by highly detailed planning, informed by incisive evaluations of the children's previous learning and focused clearly on developing the children's thinking skills and personal capabilities. Through well-structured, innovative and skilful teaching, the children were enabled to develop their knowledge, skills and conceptual understanding while engaging in enjoyable, active learning tasks. A particular strength of the lessons observed was the highly effective questioning by the teachers and classroom assistants, which supported and challenged appropriately the children, enabling them to make excellent progress in their learning.
- Across the school and the nursery unit, the teachers work closely and purposefully with the highly skilled classroom assistants to meet fully the needs of all the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning. A wide range of high quality resources are allocated to meeting the children's increasingly complex needs; these include research-informed interventions

which are tailored appropriately. The skilful analysis of qualitative and quantitative data and the well-embedded monitoring arrangements ensure that the progress of the children is tracked appropriately and is continuously under review. The school's strong links with external support agencies and with parents support further the children's learning and progress.

- The detailed and extensive literacy planning is clearly informed by the teachers' understanding of the interconnectedness between reading, writing and the development of the children's oral and thinking skills. Consequently, the teachers provide ample opportunities for extended writing through literacy work, including that which is closely linked to the children's reading, and across all areas of the curriculum. The children's reading skills are developed from the early years where, for example, the children use frequently the reading corner in play-based learning. The school is piloting a computer-based reading programme which supplements very well the reading schemes in place and the wide range of resources available for the promotion of literacy. These include extensive use of information and communication technology which enriches further the children's learning experiences; the school also hosts regular workshops by visiting writers which develop the children's enjoyment of reading.
- The children experience a very well-balanced and progressive mathematics programme. The planning for numeracy is thorough; it places a strong focus on the development of thinking skills and ensures continuity and progression across the school, including in mental mathematics. The children are provided with very creative and challenging learning activities which clarify their understanding of mathematical concepts and extend further their mathematical thinking across the curriculum in a variety of meaningful real-life contexts. Information and communication technology is seamlessly integrated to extend and support the children's learning in all aspects of mathematics. The children's books are very well presented and reflect well the range of practical and activity-based tasks across the key stages.
- The positive, well-organised and stimulating learning environment in the nursery unit develops very effectively the children's decision-making, language development and self-management skills. The staff employ a wide range of methods, including perceptive observations of the children and well-focused evaluations of their learning, to assess the children's progress and development; this information is used very effectively to inform future planning to meet the children's individual needs. The interesting and varied learning programme provides appropriate creativity, challenge and progression for the children throughout the year. The quality of the interactions between the staff and the children is consistently of a very high quality. The staff model play effectively and make skilful use of open-ended questioning to extend the children's thinking, develop their problem-solving skills and extend their language.
- A very caring, supportive and inclusive ethos permeates the life and work of the school; this is evident in the very high quality of the working relationships at all levels. The school community is demonstrating its commitment to its shared vision and mission statement by creating a learning community where children, parents, staff and governors work together to achieve high standards with mutual care and support of one another. The school is clearly child-centred; the children's views are listened to and acted upon and they are empowered to make a valuable contribution to the development of the school including through the school council, where the children play an important role in the ongoing

review of school policies. The children display a respectful awareness of the needs of their peers and others, and demonstrate a mature understanding of contemporary issues including social justice. They benefit from very good opportunities to develop their interests further through the wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities such as trips, visiting speakers and opportunities to perform in school events and take part in competitions; these develop very well the children's talents and confidence.

- The school gives outstanding attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, through effective engagement with external bodies that support children going to school on foot or by bicycle. In addition, the agreed and very effective implementation of a healthy eating policy and the provision of a wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities encourage the children to adopt a very positive approach to exercise and a healthy lifestyle.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- Leadership at all levels is focused clearly on creating a culture of achievement, improvement and ambition, where the spiritual, physical, intellectual, moral, emotional and social development of every child is central to the work and life of the school. The principal leads by example, he inspires the confidence and respect of the staff, parents and the wider school community and is highly effective in nurturing a collegial and supportive approach to improving further the well-being, learning experiences of, and standards achieved by, every child. The creative, systematic and highly strategic improvement work led by the senior leadership team is supported very well by the innovative and very focused work of the co-ordinators, teaching and support staff; this has resulted in an exceptionally cohesive, ambitious and vibrant school community which places the child at the centre of all their work.
- The school improvement work is underpinned by the excellent focus placed on continuous professional development for all; this is aligned clearly to the school's priorities for development. The staff benefit from access to a wide range of high-quality internal and external development opportunities which enhance their professional expertise and impact very positively on the school's provision.
- The school development plan (SDP)<sup>1</sup> is very well-informed by the school's highly effective self-evaluation processes, including the highly adept use of extensive internal school data, which is analysed thoroughly and meticulously. The SDP outlines a range of appropriate priorities for development across the school's provision; these are underpinned by clear and appropriate action plans, which guide very well the improvement work. There are excellent processes in place to monitor and evaluate regularly and robustly the impact of the actions taken. The school's plans for development are highly effective in bringing about improvements and are very well-informed by extensive consultation with the children, parents, staff and governors; the impact of the improvement work is clearly evident in the very high quality of the provision and in the excellent standards attained by the children.

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<sup>1</sup> The school development plan meets the requirements of the School Development Planning Regulations (2010) NI.

- The school has very strong links with the parents, the Parish and the wider community. The parents are kept fully informed about their children's progress and achievements through, for example, regular meetings and the school website. The curricular workshops provide practical guidance to parents on how they can support their child's learning and the frequent school social events both celebrate the children's achievements and contribute to the cohesiveness of the school community. The children's learning experiences are enhanced significantly through the school's extensive links with other schools including online partnerships, and the work with third-level education providers.
- 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 are extremely well informed about the life and work of the school and take a proactive role in the school improvement process; for example, in engaging in in-depth meetings with curriculum leaders, taking part in lesson observations and monitoring the progress of individual children. The governors are highly reflective and support very well the staff in the continuous improvement of the provision and raising further the standards the children attain.
- 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 in year 6 reported that they feel happy and secure in school, and know what to do if they have any concerns about their well-being.

## **8. Overall effectiveness**

St Joseph's Primary School and Nursery Unit 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.

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