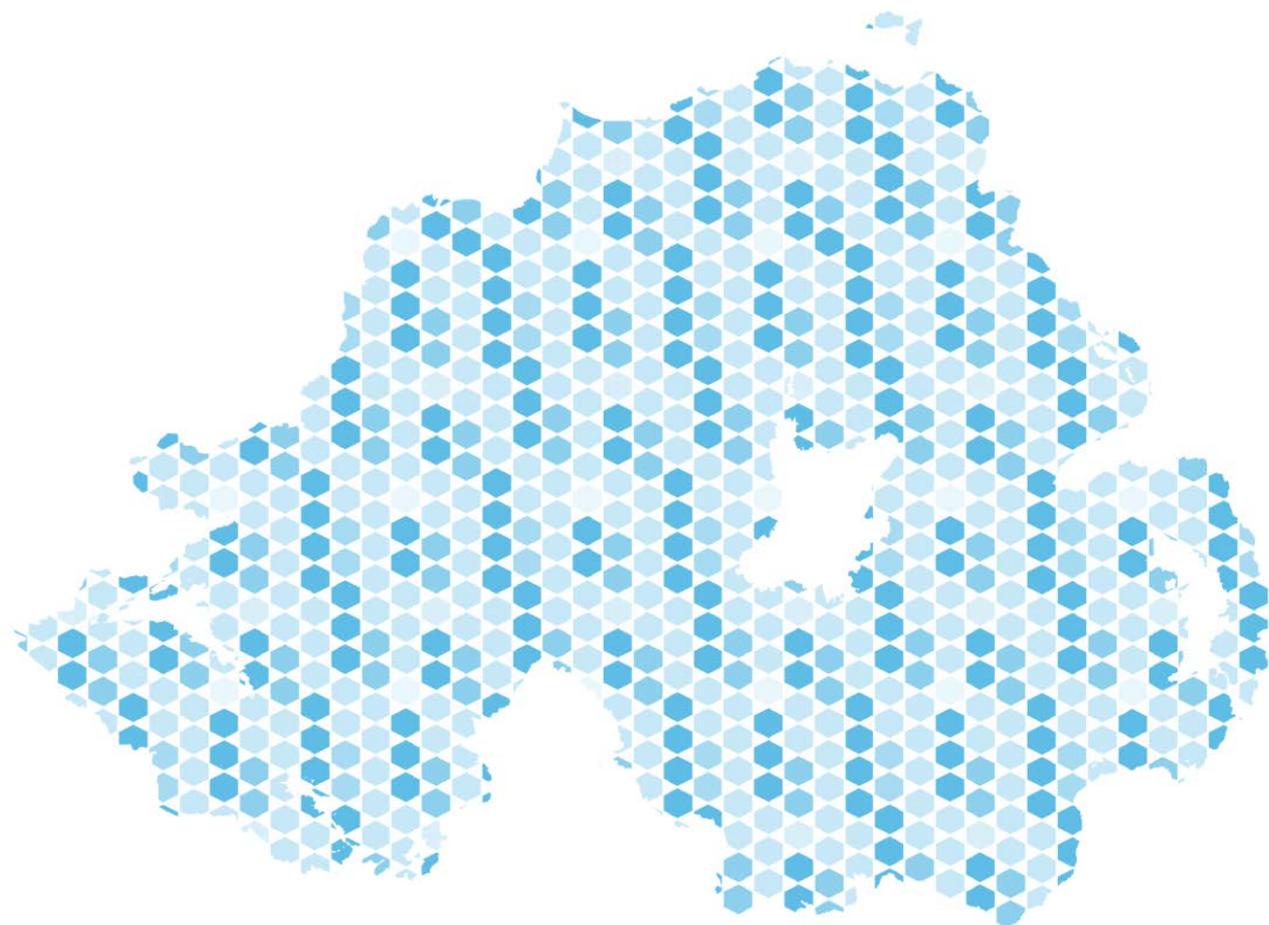


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Dromara Primary School,  
Dromara, County Down

Report of an Inspection in  
April 2016

*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 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	4
8. Overall effectiveness	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 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 representatives from the governors;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- The opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete confidential questionnaires.

Nine percent of the parents responded to the confidential questionnaire. Almost all of the responses were very supportive of all aspects of the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents acknowledged the friendly, approachable and dedicated staff and the school's positive reputation in the community. Most of the staff completed the confidential questionnaire and their responses were also highly positive; in particular, the staff highlighted the effective and caring leadership and the staff's enthusiasm and diligence in meeting the needs and interests of the children. The ETI has reported on the questionnaires to the principal and representatives of the board of governors.

## **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**

Dromara Primary School is a controlled primary school situated in the County Down village of Dromara. The children come from the village and the surrounding rural area. The enrolment has remained stable over the past four years and the school is operating at around 90% capacity. In the same period, there has been a gradual increase in the number of children on the special needs register and the number of children entitled to free school meals. The school works closely with other local schools to improve the quality of learning and teaching and is embarking on a Shared Education partnership with St Michael's Primary School, Finnis.

<b>Dromara Primary School</b>	<b>2012-13</b>	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2015-16</b>
Enrolment	188	180	188	180
% Attendance	96.7	95.6	96.6	N/A
% NI Primary school average	94.9	95.6	95.4	N/A
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	21.8	28.3	27.1	28.3
No. of children on SEN register	32	37	44	40
% of children on SEN register	17.0	20.6	23.4	22.2
No. of children with statements of educational needs	*	*	*	5

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

\*fewer than 5

N/A not available

#### 4. Overall findings of the inspection

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

#### 5. Achievements and standards

- The children are welcoming, polite and well-spoken. Nearly all are highly motivated and settle quickly and enthusiastically to their learning. The children express and share their ideas with confidence producing attractive, informative and creative displays of their work across the curriculum. They engage easily and confidently with adults, including visitors to the school, treating them, and one another, with kindness and respect.
- The school's internal assessment data shows that most children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make progress in English and mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation.
- The standard of written work achieved by the children is of a high quality and is celebrated in attractive displays throughout the school. The pupils enjoy a rich variety of extended writing opportunities which develops their research and editing skills as well as creating a meaningful context for developing their understanding of grammar and punctuation. The older children are given the opportunity to help the younger children with their reading skills. By the end of key stage (KS) 2, the majority of the children can read with fluency, confidence and an expression which reveals an empathetic understanding of the text.

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

- From the foundation stage, the children engage enthusiastically with mathematical challenges and can explain confidently their reasoning. In all key stages, the children have a clear understanding of key mathematical concepts; their competence is developing further with the current focus on applying mathematical strategies and the associated vocabulary more flexibly across the school. By the end of KS 2, the children are highly competent across most mathematical processes and key concepts and display flexible thinking when attempting unfamiliar problems and investigations.
- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are making progress; the continuous improvement in their all round development enables them to progress successfully and confidently to the next stage of their learning.
- Throughout the school the children use information and communication technology effectively to enhance their learning across the curriculum.

## **6. Provision for learning**

- There is a comprehensive, well-integrated approach to assessment, planning, learning and teaching across the school. The teachers' planning is detailed and effective, taking close account of the range of ability and individual needs and interests within the classes. The teachers use well a wide range of assessment for learning strategies to engage the children in their learning; their insightful evaluations of the children's responses are used effectively to identify the needs of individuals and to inform future planning. The impact and out-workings of the recent development work in play-based learning and in transition arrangements are of a high quality. As a result, the quality, progression and challenge in the children's early learning experiences have been further enhanced.
- During inspection, all of the teaching observed was effective in promoting learning, with a majority being very good. The teachers build well on the children's prior knowledge and understanding; they create meaningful connections across the areas of learning linked to the children's own experiences. The lessons are well paced and contain active learning opportunities within carefully tailored group tasks; the children are given regular opportunities to discuss and review their thinking. The classroom assistants provide valuable support to the teachers and the children.
- The provision of highly effective individual education plans, carefully differentiated learning activities and well-targeted specific interventions for children who require additional support with their learning are key priorities and strengths in the school. The staff use a complementary blend of approaches to reduce the children's barriers to learning and to include them fully in all aspects of school life. For example, there is clear evidence that the skilfully delivered social and emotional learning programmes and the recently introduced mathematics recovery programme are producing improved outcomes for the children.

- The school has a consistent approach to the children's acquisition and development of literacy skills; teachers make meaningful connections between the development of the writer's craft and the development of reading skills. In the foundation stage, the children become familiar with different forms of print and experiment with informal mark-making. The children's letter formation, word-building skills and knowledge of the basic conventions such as simple sentence structure are developed well through shared writing activities. As they progress, the children experience a wide variety of writing activities across a range of genres. Reading, including for information, is promoted well through the recently reviewed reading schemes which are supplemented effectively by appropriate support materials including novels, 'big books' and reference materials. The literacy co-ordinator has designed a very useful reading programme to support parents of foundation stage and KS 1 children, the evaluative feedback of which has been positive.
- In the highly effective mathematics lessons, teachers ask probing questions and provide well-paced and stimulating mental mathematics activities. The teachers evaluate carefully the schemes for mathematics which ensure that the children experience a well-balanced coverage of number, shape and space, measures and data-handling across all key stages, and that challenge and progression are maintained from year to year. Marking for improvement is of a high quality and well-matched teaching and learning approaches are prioritised in every class; both are key strengths of the provision. Learning opportunities could be developed further with a greater emphasis on using mathematics in real life and extending the cross-curricular application of mathematics both in and beyond the classroom.
- The pastoral care in the school is of a very high quality. The new school motto: *'Happy children; learning and achieving together'* permeates the welcoming and mutually supportive atmosphere in the school community. Open working relationships at all levels and the continuous focus which the staff place on extending the quality of the children's experiences and achievements impacts positively on the children's all-round development. The children in year 6 talk enthusiastically about their extensive and enjoyable range of learning experiences. In particular, they highlight the many creative and sporting extra-curricular activities and the encouragement and help they receive from all of the staff.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity thereby encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The senior leadership has a clear vision for school improvement and has agreed, with the staff, a strategic direction for future developments in the school. The staff work effectively and collaboratively to improve further the children's learning experiences and the standards they attain. Appropriately, the senior leaders have identified the need to widen the management structure and to continue to expand the leadership capacity across the school in order to sustain and improve further the children's learning. The inspection findings support the importance of these priorities.

- The school development plan<sup>2</sup> is well-informed by appropriate consultation with the staff, children, parents and governors. The rigorous school improvement process and the highly effective arrangements for the staff's continuous professional development are linked purposefully to the improvement priorities; the impacts of both are evident in the classroom practice and the high quality of the children's learning experiences.
- There are effective arrangements in place for communicating and consulting with parents to involve them appropriately in their children's education and the ongoing work of the school. The widening links with other schools, external agencies and the community enrich the children's learning experiences and broaden the curriculum.
- Based on the evidence available 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 provide appropriate support and challenge to the senior leaders and are highly committed to improving further their understanding of learning and developments in the primary phase.
- 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 year 6 children reported that they felt safe in school and knew what to do if they had any concerns about their well-being.

## **8. Overall effectiveness**

Dromara Primary 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.

---

<sup>2</sup> The school development plan meets the requirements of the School Development Planning Regulations (NI) 2010

**Health and Safety**

1. The employing authority, board of governors and principal need to complete a risk assessment and keep under review the arrangements for keeping the children safe from traffic at drop-off and collection times.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2016

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](http://www.etini.gov.uk)