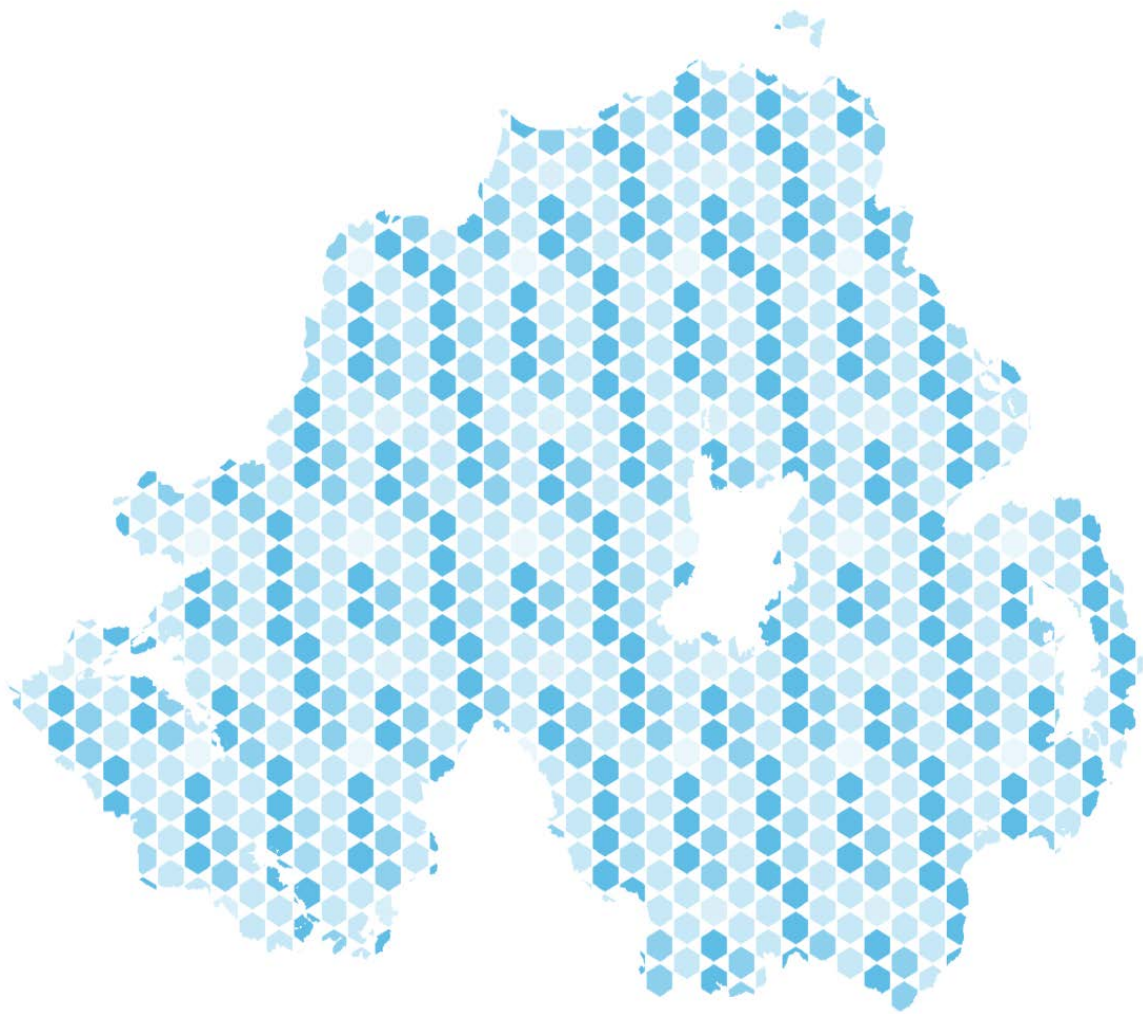


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Rathmore Primary School,
Bangor, Co Down

Report of an Inspection in
February 2014

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



CSE



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.eti.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 (total number in the school per category)	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	388	75	19%	38
Teaching staff	26	19	73%	5
Support staff	42	10	24%	*

* fewer than 5

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) is trialling a range of methods for collecting the views of parents about the life and work of the school. As a result, the response rate to the parental questionnaire may be low.

The responses to the parental questionnaires indicated a high level of satisfaction with the work of the school and nursery unit. In the written comments, the parents highlighted the welcoming, friendly atmosphere, the approachability of the principal and the diligent and enthusiastic staff. A few issues were discussed with the principal and the governors. All of the teachers and a minority of the support staff completed questionnaires and their responses were very positive. In discussion with the governors, they expressed their appreciation for the hard work and dedication of the staff in providing a broad educational and pastoral experience for the children.

2. Context

Rathmore Primary School and Nursery Unit is situated in Bangor, County Down. A majority of the children come from the surrounding area. The enrolment has risen steadily over the last four years and now stands at 543 children in the primary school and 52 children in the nursery unit. At the time of the inspection, approximately 14% of the children were entitled to free school meals and around 11% of the children were identified by the school as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

Rathmore Primary School	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Enrolment	499	523	546	543
% Attendance	96.4%	96.5%	95.7%	96.8%
FSME Percentage ¹	7.1%	12%	14%	13.9%
% (No) of children on SEN register	12.9%	13.7%	14.4%	11.9%
No. of children with statements of educational needs	6	4	5	9
No. of newcomers	4	2	2	0

Source: data as held by the school.

*fewer than 5

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

Overall Performance Level	Very Good
Achievements and Standards	Very Good
Provision	Very Good
Leadership and Management	Very Good
Nursery Unit	Very Good

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are confident, highly motivated and display very positive attitudes to learning. They are clearly proud of their school and their behaviour is exemplary: they demonstrate very good personal and social skills and show respect towards their peers, the staff and visitors. Almost all of the children settle quickly to their learning: they participate co-operatively in paired and small group activities and work independently and manage aspects of their own learning.

¹ 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* of the past four years shows that in English, the school's performance is above or in line with the Northern Ireland (NI) average in two of the years and in mathematics, the school's performance is consistently above or in line with the Northern Ireland (NI) average. Compared with schools in the same free school meals (FSM) category, the performance in English is consistently below the average and in mathematics it is below the average in two of the three years: most recently, the performance in both English and mathematics shows a significant and improving trend. The school's internal performance data shows 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 in line with their ability or above expectation.
- From an early age, the children are confident in expressing themselves orally; they engage willingly with their peers and with adults and offer extended and articulate responses. The children develop their reading skills systematically as they progress through the school. They read with fluency, expression and understanding, and discuss their favourite books and authors. The children present their work neatly and write in an appropriate range of forms and for a variety of purposes and audiences. Throughout the school, the children show enthusiasm for mathematics and display very good recall and understanding of key facts and concepts across the areas of mathematics. By the end of key stage (KS) 2, most of the children are secure in their understanding of number and place value and the most able children can apply their mathematical knowledge competently and, when encouraged, can draw on a range of strategies to complete accurately mental calculations.
- The children in the nursery unit are making very good progress in all areas of the pre-school programme. Almost all of the children join in play with others; they are motivated, well settled and enthusiastic about their learning, and show good levels of independence in their co-operation with others and in sharing of the play materials and resources. Most of the children are inquisitive and confident in exploring the activities provided for them; they talk readily to the staff and to visitors about their work and learning and have acquired a high level of mathematical awareness, and of the world around us.
- Throughout the school, the children attain very good standards in information and communication technology (ICT). They are confident and competent in using appropriately a range of software and digital media.

6. Provision

- The school has worked hard to develop a comprehensive format for medium and short-term planning which promotes a uniformity of approach. It is important that the planned activities present an appropriate level of challenge to consolidate and progress the learning of all the children.

* 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.

- Most of the learning and teaching observed was good or very good; in the remaining proportion there were areas for improvement. In the most effective practice, there was good pace, challenge and progression and a strong sense of enjoyment in the learning. The activities were well matched to the range of the children's ability and the teacher used skilful questioning to clarify and extend the children's understanding. Where the teaching was less effective, the learning was overly directed by the teacher; the activities did not meet sufficiently the range of abilities and, consequently, some of the children made limited progress in their learning. The children's work is marked regularly and positively. In the best practice, the children receive constructive feedback throughout their lessons and the written comments in their books acknowledge the children's progress and provide clear guidance on how to make further improvement.
- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified early through the analysis of internal data and teacher judgement. The teachers have a good understanding of the children's needs and use a range of strategies to support well their learning and to monitor closely their progress. The recent changes to the individual education plans encourage greater involvement of the children in setting their personal learning targets. The children are integrated effectively into class and receive high levels of support from the classroom assistants.
- The teachers create a literacy rich learning environment throughout the school that develops successfully the children's talking and listening, reading and writing skills. The provision is well led and managed; the comprehensive planning ensures progression in the children's learning and is supported by appropriate resources. The school now needs to integrate further the children's literacy skills across all areas of the curriculum. The school has worked well to develop a customised spelling and phonics programme which has been introduced very recently throughout the school.
- The children are provided with a comprehensive programme for mathematics with clear guidance for the class teachers to plan effectively for a broad and balanced coverage of the curriculum. In the best practice, the teachers build on the children's prior knowledge and understanding and use an appropriate range of strategies and resources to engage the children and to develop their mathematical language and understanding. In a majority of classes, the teachers provide the children with creative and motivating opportunities to use and apply their mathematics and to develop problem-solving skills. In the best practice, in foundation stage, play-based learning supports well the development of the children's literacy and numeracy skills.
- The quality of the provision for learning in the nursery unit is very good. The assessment of the children's learning is comprehensive. Based on this, the staff have devised clear, coherent planning and provide an interesting and progressively challenging pre-school programme that meets effectively the needs of all of the children. There is a caring ethos in the nursery; all the staff are supportive in their approach and have high expectations of the children's behaviour and learning. The quality of their interaction with the children is consistently of a high standard.

- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is very good; in the nursery unit, it is excellent. Across the school and nursery unit, the staff show a strong commitment to the care and welfare of the children and a determination to involve them in discussions and decisions that directly affect them. The year 7 ‘buddies’ are very good role models for the younger children and the active student council understand and take seriously their role in improving the life and work of the school.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity through a good range of appropriate extra-curricular activities and programmes that encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The principal provides outstanding strategic leadership. She has a clear, shared vision for the school focused on the highest quality of learning and teaching for all of the children and is well supported by the vice-principal and senior leadership team. Through the establishment of effective and consistent organisational and management structures, the principal has actively encouraged a culture of distributed leadership. These structures facilitate good communication throughout the school, enable the core curriculum co-ordinators to lead and manage effectively their areas of responsibility and support the more recently appointed co-ordinators.
- The school has a well-developed culture of self-evaluation. The comprehensive school development plan (SDP) is informed by thorough consultation with the staff, parents, children and governors and by a very effective analysis of data to identify low and underachievement and areas for improvement at individual, class and whole school level. The associated action plans are underpinned by rigorous systems for monitoring the impact of developments on learning and teaching. In addition, the action plans include areas for the professional development of staff, including the sharing of good practice. The school recognises the value of developing this aspect of self-evaluation in order to improve further the quality of learning and teaching.
- The teacher-in-charge of the nursery unit, although in post for only a few weeks, has reviewed several policies, and is developing an effective self-evaluative approach to the review of the provision in the nursery. She provides a very good role model, is successfully supported by the other staff, promotes high standards and sets a positive tone for the work of the nursery unit.
- There are very effective arrangements in place to for communicating and consulting with parents to involve them appropriately in their children’s education including: a comprehensive website; a texting service; and, curriculum information evenings. To enhance further the learning opportunities for the children, the school has established very good links with a range of other schools, with people in the community and with various external agencies.
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of the inspection, the parents, staff and school community can have a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are very well informed about the school and the school development planning process and carry out effectively their support and challenge functions.

- 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 spoke with enthusiasm and confidence about their experiences in school. They reported that they feel very happy and safe in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their well-being.

8. Conclusion

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

Health and safety/Accommodation

- The flat roof on the school leaks constantly during periods of heavy rain and often leads to internal damage.

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