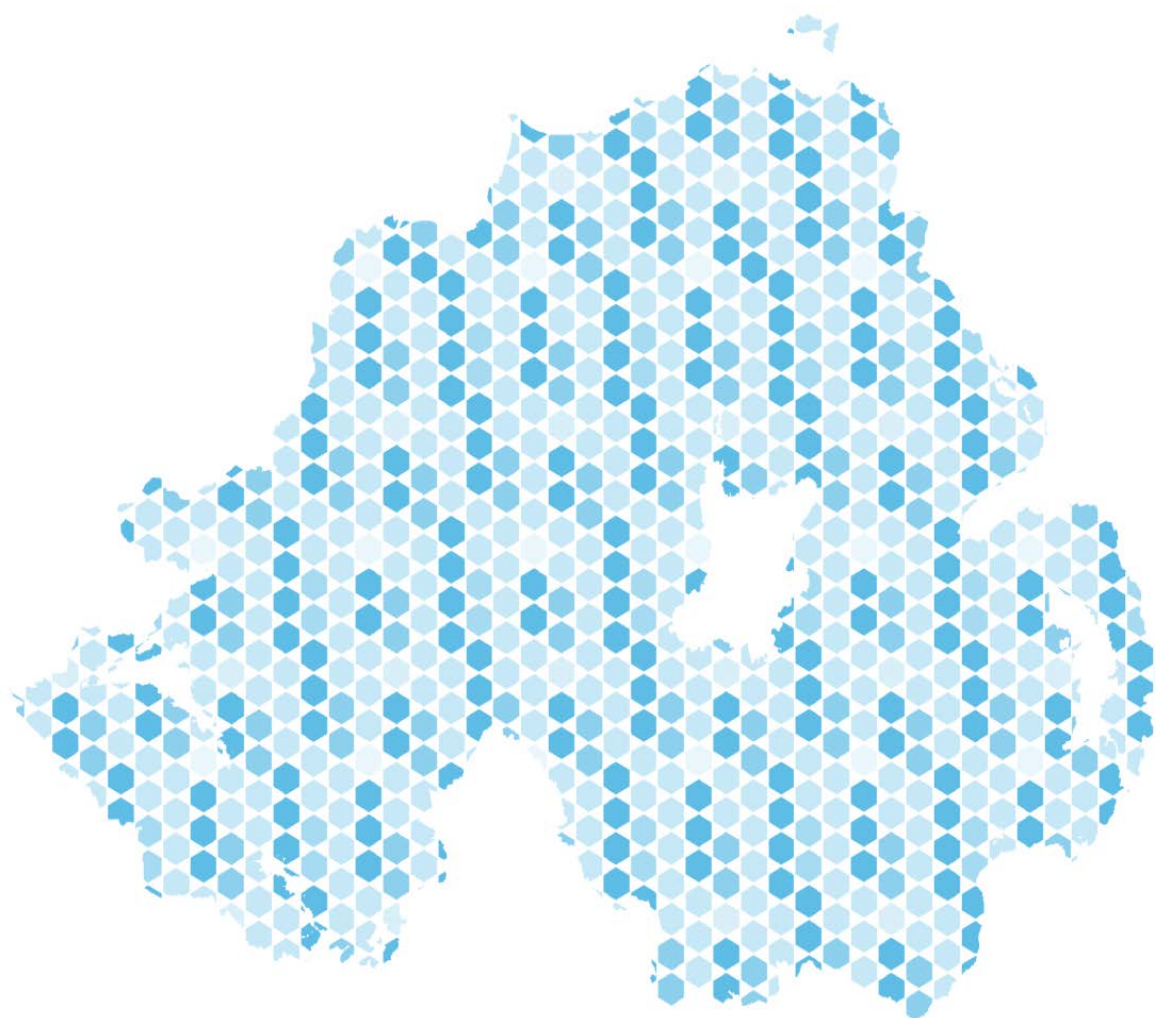


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Ben Madigan Preparatory
School, Belfast

Report of an Inspection
in September 2013

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 Inspectorate's 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 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 | Number returned | Percentage returned | Number with comments |
|---------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Parents | 106 | 12 | 11.3 | 10 |
| Teachers | 8 | 7 | 85 | * |
| Support Staff | * | * | 25 | * |

* fewer than 5

The ETI is trialling a range of methods to collect the views of parents/carers and as a result the percentage questionnaires returned may be low.

2. Context

Ben Madigan Preparatory School, the preparatory department of Belfast Royal Academy, is situated on the Antrim Road in North Belfast. Many of the children live in the immediate area; a significant minority travel from the greater Belfast and east Antrim areas. Nearly 5% of the children are entitled to free school meals. The enrolment has fallen in the past few years.

| Ben Madigan Preparatory School | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 |
|--|-----------|-------------|-------------|---------|
| Enrolment | 151 | 141 | 127 | 124 |
| % Attendance (NI Average) | 96.1 (-) | 96.3 (95.2) | 95.7 (94.7) | |
| FSME Percentage ¹ | 0 | 2.4 | 4.7 | 4.8 |
| % (No) of children on SEN register | 10.3 (18) | 6.1 (10) | 3.9 (5) | 10 |
| No. of children with statements of educational needs | * | * | * | * |
| No. of newcomers | * | 0 | 0 | |

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

¹ The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

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 under-achievement where applicable;
- the quality of provision in the school; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

4. Overall findings

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| Overall Performance Level | Very good |
| Achievements and Standards | Very good |
| Provision | Very good |
| Leadership and Management | Good |

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are motivated to do well and nearly all have a very positive disposition towards their learning. When given the opportunity, they work well with one another in paired and group work, and take responsibility for their own learning; a majority display high levels of critical thinking.
- An analysis of the end of Key Stage (KS) 2 performance data over the past four years shows that in English and mathematics the school's performance is consistently *above* the Northern Ireland (NI) average. Compared with schools in the same free school meal category, the performance in English and mathematics is well above the average in three of the past four years.* The school's internal performance data shows that most 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.
- In English, by year 7 the children read fluently and discuss the themes, characters and content of texts. They write fluently and with creativity for a variety of purposes and for different audiences. In a minority of classes, the children would benefit from having more opportunities to work from a greater range of contexts for extended writing and, on occasion, opportunities for more extended responses.

* 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.

- The children have a very good understanding of key concepts across the mathematics curriculum. The school has identified the need to develop further, in a progressive manner, key mathematical skills and processes and more investigative work. The inspection findings endorse this. In the best practice, in the majority of lessons observed, the children apply their knowledge very well to problem-solving and practical investigations. In most classes, the children's mental mathematics strategies are developing effectively, and support well their learning and thinking in mathematics.
- By the end of key stage (KS) 2, most of the children attain standards in English and mathematics which are in line with their ability or better than expected.
- The children identified as having special educational needs (SEN) work well alongside their peers, and most make good progress in reaching their identified targets, attaining standards in line with their ability.
- The achievements and standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are very good. The children in year 4 and year 7 are entered for the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) ICT Accreditation scheme and achieve standards which are above the Northern Ireland average.

6. Provision for learning

- The quality of the lessons observed ranged from outstanding to satisfactory. In a majority of the lessons, it was very good or outstanding. In the most effective practice, the children benefited from well-planned, structured lessons which were linked well to previous learning. The teachers used skilful questioning to encourage children to think and express their opinions; the skills and knowledge acquired were consolidated effectively through well-planned plenary sessions.
- In a minority of the lessons, the learning and teaching were not sufficiently matched to the needs, interests and abilities of all of the children. As a consequence, a minority of children required more challenge in their learning as they are capable of achieving even higher standards than they presently do. The school has identified the dissemination of the outstanding or very good practice to all of the classes as its key priority and the inspection findings endorse this.
- The recent school developments in the children's use of ICT, including the forward planning and vision for their use of the most up to date ICT tools, are noteworthy and are having a direct impact on the present very good provision for ICT.
- The provision for SEN is very good. Through professional judgement and the effective analysis of performance data, the school identifies quickly and effectively those children who require support with their learning. The individual education plans (IEP) have well-focused targets for further improvement. The school makes effective use of a range of performance data, including standardised tests, to track carefully the children's progress. The staff liaise closely with external support agencies to ensure the children's needs are met as effectively as possible.

- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is very good. The children benefit from the high priority to the care of the individual child. The children's work and achievements are celebrated well throughout the school. The older children are encouraged to take on roles and responsibilities, through, for example, an active participation in assemblies and the eco-club. A particular feature of the school is its strong sense of community. The individual teachers operate their own reward systems. However, the quality and effectiveness of these systems to motivate the children and improve their learning vary too much and this matter needs addressed. The children's learning experiences are enhanced further through a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

7. Leadership and management

- The Principal and management team have faced and taken steps to deal with recent challenges, for example, a falling enrolment. In addition, as a strategic group, they now use a wider range of data to assess the children's progress and inform the school's improvement work.
- The subject co-ordinators, who carry a number of responsibilities are developing effective methods to monitor and evaluate the quality of provision in their specialist areas. They are using well external benchmarked performance data to gauge the school's performance compared to other similar schools. Additionally, they have started to use a much wider range of internal performance data, including standardised tests to identify those children who are underachieving in literacy and numeracy. This work requires further development.
- Overall, the school's processes for self-evaluation leading to improvement are good and improving. The school is correctly developing its self-evaluation arrangements to identify and disseminate better the existing very good or better practice. It is now timely that the school and Board of Governors are reviewing and clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the staff, to enable the existing and new co-ordinators to provide strategic leadership and lead development and improvement in their respective areas of the curriculum.
- The school development plan (SDP) meets fully the requirements of the School Development Plan Regulations (NI) 2010). The governors are well informed about the life and work of the school; they provide challenge where needed. The governors are well aware of the school's very good performance in end of key stage results. They understand and exercise well their role in providing an effective leadership challenge and support function to the Principal. The parents, staff and school community can have confidence in the aspects of governance inspected. The governors now need to develop their role further, to review and challenge, where necessary, evidence presented to them from a fuller range of post holders on the effectiveness of the action being taken to raise standards further.
- The ETI reported to the Principal and representatives of the governors the many positive responses and the few concerns emerging from the questionnaires.
- The children who met with members of the inspection team spoke with maturity about their connections with the school community and their wide range of learning experiences; they feel safe and secure in school and reported that they know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.

- 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, however the following minor area needs to be addressed, namely ensuring that even when there is nothing to report on safeguarding matters, that this fact is recorded.

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 children, and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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