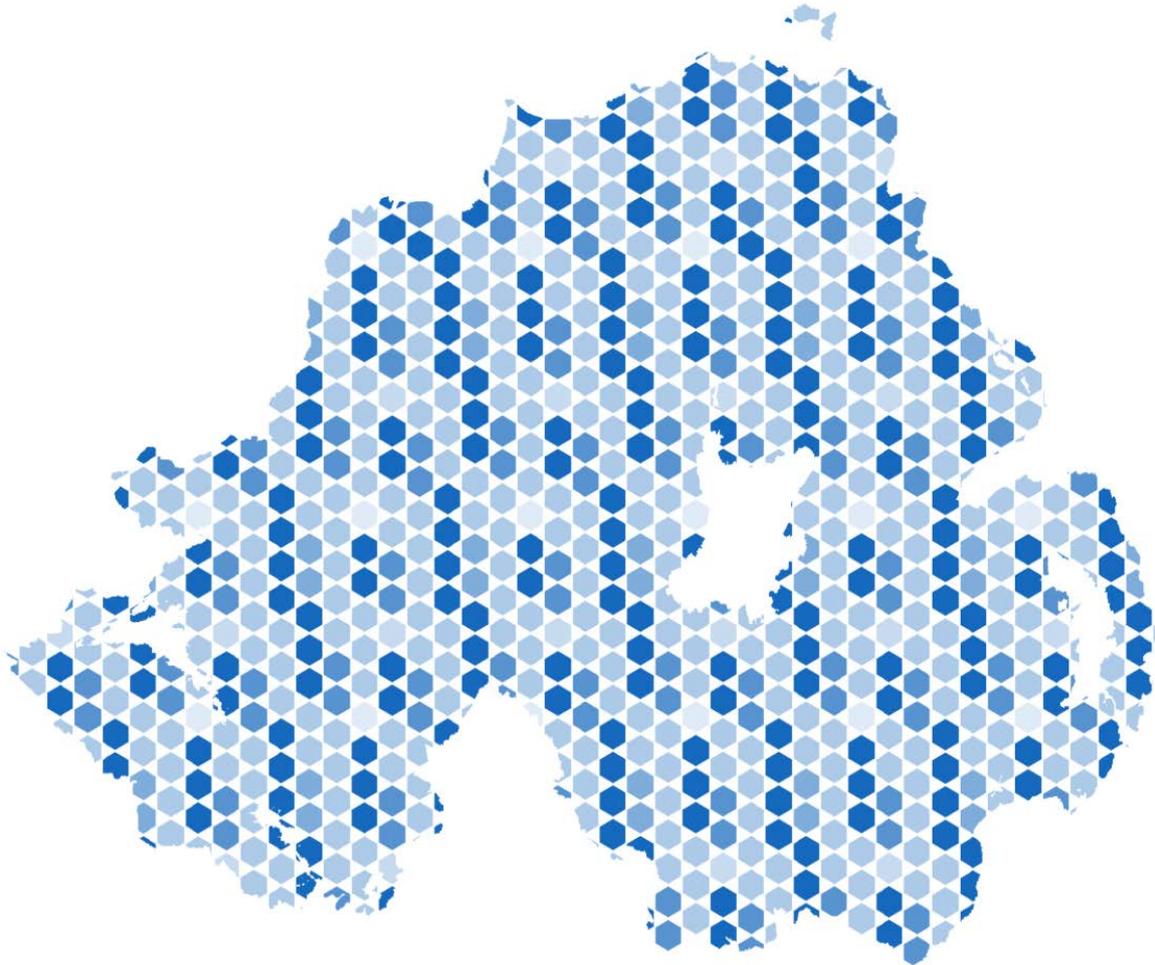


SPECIAL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Glenveagh School, Belfast

Report of an Inspection in
February 2014



Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



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

Inspectors observed teaching and learning, scrutinised documentation and the pupils' 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	189	*	*	*
Teachers	25	22	88	6
Support Staff	63	43	68	*

* fewer than 5

The ETI is trialling a range of methods for collecting the views of parents/carers about the life and work of the school. As a result, the response rate to the parent/carer questionnaires may be low.

All of the parental questionnaire responses are positive. The parents value the progress made by their children and the kind and supportive ethos throughout the school. Additional comments were very supportive and positive of the staff and school. The teacher and support staff questionnaire responses were very positive, and indicate strong support for the principal and life of the school. There were a few areas of concern expressed. The Education and Training Inspectorate reported to the principal and governors, the small number of areas of concern emerging from the questionnaires and, where appropriate, these have been commented on within the report.

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of special 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.etini.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-special.htm>.

Inspectors observed teaching and learning, scrutinised documentation and the pupils' written work and held formal and informal discussions with pupils, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included a meeting with representatives from the board of governors.

2. Context

Glenveagh School provides education for 190 pupils, aged eight to nineteen years, with severe learning difficulties. The school is situated in Belfast and originally was designed to provide for 130 pupils. The pupils come from the greater Belfast area. The enrolment has remained steady over the last five years and the pupils who attend have increasing complex medical, mental health and learning needs. There are five sensory classrooms with 40 pupils who require high levels of support to meet their additional medical and social and emotional needs.

Glenveagh School	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Enrolment	190	193	190	189
% Attendance	87.9%	90.8%	90%	87.2%
Teachers	25	25	25	25
Classroom assistants	62	63	63	63
FSME Percentage ¹	51%	44%	54%	54%
No. of newcomers	0	0	0	0

Source: data as held by the school.

3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the pupils' achievements and standards;
- the quality of provision in the school; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

4. Overall finding

Overall Performance Level	Outstanding
Achievements and Standards	Outstanding
Provision	Outstanding
Leadership and Management	Outstanding

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The pupils love their school and are very happy and secure in all they do; each pupil feels valued and part of the family community of the school. They experience a rich curriculum and positive ethos as their achievements are celebrated frequently by staff and pupils.

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

- The pupils are well behaved and develop a positive disposition to learning with good social and communication skills. The pupils with challenging behaviours make very good progress and become more tolerant, enjoying a variety of experiences as a result of well structured programmes designed around their individual needs.
- The pupils achieve well and develop progressively during their time in school and are well prepared for transition to appropriate placements on leaving; most demonstrate independence and have a range of social and language skills which they can apply in various settings.
- The pupils respond well to the practical learning opportunities presented to them and almost all demonstrate a good understanding of number facts and numerical operations. The evidence in the pupils' class books indicates variety and progression in the learning and increasing flexibility in their mathematical thinking.
- Most pupils read and listen to stories with enjoyment and high levels of engagement. They make appropriate progress in their writing in line with their ability and benefit from the excellent opportunities to develop their literacy skills in real and relevant contexts and different audiences preparing them well for life.
- The pupils' skills in talking and listening are developed creatively through the innovative use of information and communication technology (ICT), music, arts, practical and enrichment activities.
- A small number of pupils achieve accreditation at gold, silver and bronze levels in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. The scheme is used effectively to support the pupils' greater independence and learning; for example, map reading and healthy eating are reinforced in the classroom and encouraged as a life choice.
- Most of the pupils are confident and competent in their use of ICT skills. The majority leave with a range of appropriate accreditation in word processing and audio, video software through the National Open College Network and City & Guilds awarding bodies.

6. Provision

- There is a significant increase within recent years in the number of pupils who require delegated nursing care also pupils with mental health, challenging behaviours and profound and multiple learning difficulties. The school deploys appropriate resources to manage the needs of pupils who have complex needs relating to significant medical conditions. The senior management ensure that careful risk assessment and staff training underpins the working practices within the school and on outings. The governors also raise the issue of therapy support and the need for this to be improved.
- The limitations of the school accommodation is a significant challenge and a source of stress for staff who are constantly struggling to ensure the building is suitably adapted to meet the needs of the very vulnerable pupils. (Appendix)

- The quality of the teaching was always good and very good or outstanding in 90% of the lessons observed, with 20% of the lessons evaluated as outstanding. The highly skilled teachers build effectively on the pupils' prior knowledge and experiences, and provide innovative and creative lessons with practical and meaningful activities that the pupils respond to with interest and curiosity. The teachers and classroom assistants work collaboratively in teams and use a range of strategies and resources to make lessons fun, interesting and relevant. Comprehensive planning for collaborative lessons across classes is an innovative feature of the best teaching observed.
- There is a coherent, whole school approach to the arrangements for planning, teaching and assessment. Although the pupils have a wide range of abilities and capabilities, the teachers and assistants have appropriately high expectations of them and provide ample opportunities to challenge them and develop their talents. There are effective individual education plans (IEPs) in place for every pupil.
- ICT is used very creatively to empower pupils, develop self-esteem and promote positive attitudes to learning, for example, the use of the internet, the development of multi-media books, and film-making. Applications for iPods and iPads are used effectively with selected pupils to support their communication. The sector leading use of ICT significantly enhances teaching and learning and helps pupils to develop communication skills.
- The pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum and benefit greatly from the innovative and creative use of music, art, ICT and PE to enhance their experiences. They develop their literacy and numeracy through well planned, fun activities such as the Thriller movie and multi-media presentations. Music is a strong feature of the school curriculum and the pupils benefit greatly from the high expectations for the choir, the school rock band and individual music performances. The pupils achieve well in externally accredited music qualifications and the overall musical experience has resulted in important developments in pupils self esteem, confidence, concentration and attention.
- The provision for developing the pupils' oral communication skills is outstanding. Most pupils read and listen to stories with enjoyment and high levels of engagement. The literacy team prioritise appropriately the integration of reading, writing and talking and listening. They have developed an effective school phonics scheme to meet better the needs of the pupils with significant learning difficulties
- The team use a range of strategies to evaluate the provision which informs future developments, including filming learning and teaching to evaluate the characteristics of effective practice.
- The whole school programme for mathematics is comprehensive and guides well the teachers' planning, ensuring progressive development of the pupils' mathematical language, skills and understanding. Very good use is made of a range of practical materials, games, strategies and mathematical experiences, set in real life contexts, to engage the pupils' mathematical curiosity and develop and consolidate their mathematical thinking.

- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is outstanding. The staff provide a safe and welcoming environment, the caring and supportive ethos permeates all aspects of the school. The working relationships at all levels are very positive. The pupils informed the members of the inspection team that they feel safe, and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety and well-being. They highlighted the fun things they do in school such as swimming, visits to the donkey sanctuary and the school performances.
- In the senior and leavers departments high quality teaching focuses very well on appropriate areas of personal and social skills, functional numeracy and literacy, living in the community, ICT and independent living skills. Those pupils who require additional support due to their challenging behaviour are successfully participating in appropriate in-house activities to engage their interest for example, horticulture outdoor activity, cookery. The school effectively use the local community resources for social and life skills and have established good links with voluntary bodies that provide real life vocational and occupational support. To develop the provision further the senior management team should align the post fourteen transition planning more closely with IEPs.

7. Leadership and management

- The principal demonstrates warmth, direction and outstanding leadership and combines clear thinking with distributed leadership. She has a clear strategic vision for the development of the school that has been shared and discussed at length with all the staff. The school has a well established culture of self evaluation. The vice principal provides effective leadership and supports the recently appointed senior teachers who have effectively led in the development of a number of key areas including curriculum development and pastoral care.
- The well constructed school development plan meets the requirements of the School Development Plan Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010; it clearly outlines the strategic aims and key areas for development that are supported by the high quality action plans and policies developed by the co-ordinators of each area. The senior teachers have reviewed most of the school policies and work well with staff teams to continually develop the provision to ensure all pupils “enjoy their learning journey and reach their full potential.”
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the parents, staff and school community can have confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated; the board of governors are very well informed about the life and work of the school. They provide excellent support for the principal, staff and parents and are effective in their challenge function.
- The governors raised concern about the increasing admissions of pupils with significant medical conditions and have taken action to ensure that the school policy and working practices are robust and carefully monitored. The ETI endorse the vigilance of the governors and consider the need to secure and develop further collaborative working between health and education providers in the interest of the pupils and to reduce the pressures on the staff.
- 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.

8. Conclusion

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

APPENDIX

Accommodation issues

- The accommodation does not meet fully the needs of the number of pupils enrolled in the school.
- The school have adapted stores and all available rooms as teaching and meeting rooms. The accommodation is now very limited and there are insufficient areas to store essential equipment.
- There are insufficient rooms available for the pupils with challenging behaviour and sensory needs and the school is built on a very limited site with insufficient outdoor play space or grounds to enable pupils with behavioural issues to walk, calm down and relax.
- The lack of suitable withdrawal rooms and facilities for pupils with challenging behaviours needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.
- The location of some of the senior classes in mobile accommodation off site is unsuitable especially for pupils with sensory or mobility issues.
- The provision for staff including health professionals is extremely limited.
- The roof lights to the main concourse area are leaking during heavy rain and require urgent remedial work.
- The lack of storage area for the large number of chairs and equipment necessary for the pupils decreases the floor space and presents a health and safety risk.
- The lack of storage facilities for the caretaker to store essential equipment presents risks to the pupils with equipment stored behind screens in public areas.
- Drainage from the kitchen areas in five classrooms is inadequate and causes foul odours that affects the pupils' learning and comfort.
- Electronic entry systems on four gates to the rear of the senior classrooms needs to be installed as a matter of urgency.
- The vinyl flooring in the gymnasium is lifting and requires urgent attention to prevent pupils from tripping and falling.
- The blinds fitted to the roof lights in the gymnasium have become damaged and are potentially dangerous and require urgent attention to ensure the safety of those using this area.

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