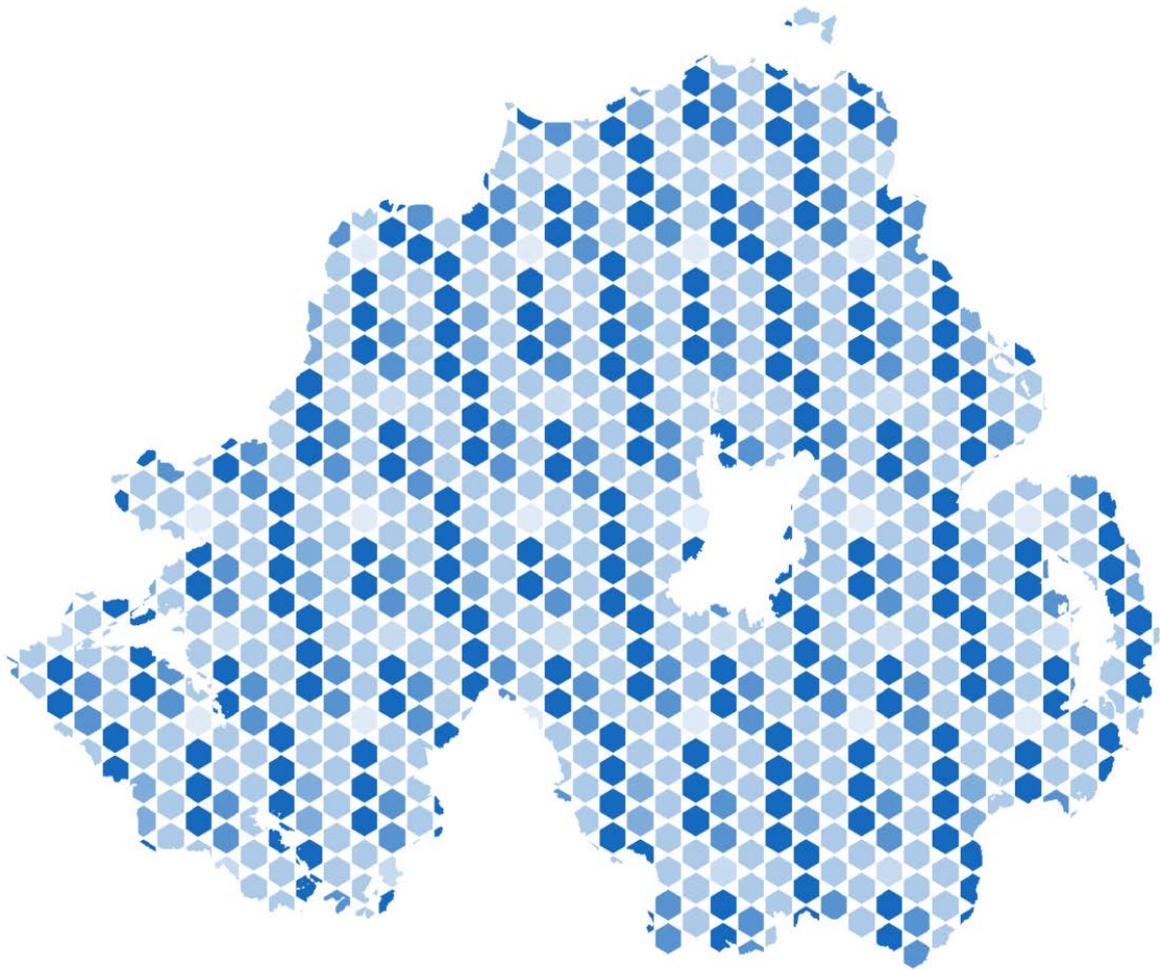


SPECIAL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Riverside School, Antrim

Report of an Inspection in
January 2015

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 pupils, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with representatives from the governors;
- meetings with groups of pupils; 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	58	*		*
Teachers	8	7	87%	*
Support Staff	14	*	14%	*

* 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 were positive. The parents value the progress made by their children and the inclusive and supportive ethos throughout the school. The small number of concerns raised were discussed with the chairperson of the board of governors and with the principal. The teacher and support staff questionnaire responses were positive, and indicated support for the principal and life of the school.

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.

2. Context

Riverside School provides education for 59 pupils, aged four to nineteen years, with severe learning difficulties some of whom have additional medical, physical or sensory impairments. The school opened in January 1999, and is set in spacious landscaped grounds within Antrim town. The majority of pupils are from the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) catchment area that includes Antrim, Templepatrick, Crumlin, Ballyclare, Kells and Randalstown. The principal and vice-principal were appointed three years ago; at the time of the inspection 2 teachers were availing of job sharing opportunities and 2 teachers were on sick leave.

Riverside School	20011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	46	48	48	59
% Attendance	91.5	89.6	92.4	92.8
Teachers	9	9	9	9
Classroom assistants	15	13	13	13
FSME Percentage ^[1]	32.6	37.5	31.3	37.9
No. of newcomers	*	*	*	*

Source: data as held by the school.

3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

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

4. Overall finding

Overall Performance Level	Good
Achievements and Outcomes	Good
Provision	Good
Leadership and Management	Good

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and outcomes

- The pupils settle well into the supportive environment of the school and respond positively to the inclusive practice of the school community; as a result, most of the pupils make good, and sometimes better, progress towards the targets set for them. The pupils make good progress in numeracy and literacy in most classes and enjoy the practical learning strategies that are appropriate to their needs.
- The pupils achieve good standards in behaviour, social and independent living skills. They enjoy coming to school and working with friends and participating in the extended school activities. The pupils' achievements are celebrated frequently by staff and pupils with inclusive school assemblies that encourage all pupils to interact positively, tolerate and support each other.
- Most of the pupils engage well with learning and are motivated by the enjoyable lessons and stimulating activities which the staff plan appropriately for their ability and needs.

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

- The majority of the pupils achieve good levels of understanding of mathematical concepts, appropriate to their ability and experiences. A baseline assessment has been completed and recorded for each pupil with suitable plans to assess progress regularly and track progress throughout the pupils' school career.
- The majority of pupils make good progress in literacy commensurate with their ability and understanding. The teachers work hard to provide appropriate support and challenging lessons for the pupils; however, a greater consistency in the quality of pupils' learning experiences is needed to help promote their progression and achievement.
- The pupils take on roles and responsibilities within the school, for example they develop a range of skills through prefect duties or as members of the school council. They welcome the opportunity to participate in mixed age inclusion groups for topics such as storytelling.
- The senior pupils achieve a range of accreditation at levels appropriate to their abilities, with a focus on numeracy, literacy, home management and independent living skills, in preparation for life after school. They achieve well in national competitions for example, the recent successful participation of the Young Enterprise Team in the regional final.

6. Provision

- The quality of the teaching in the majority of lessons observed was very good or better. In the better practice observed, the teachers used a wide range of age appropriate strategies and resources with stimulating and practical lessons that engaged, interested and motivated the pupils. There was clear progression and differentiation with careful recording and effective use of appropriate assessments with progress recorded regularly. In most of the lessons observed, there was effective teamwork between teachers and classroom assistants that further enhanced the learning experience for the pupils. In the less-effective practice, in a small number of lessons, there was a lack of effective strategies to support pupils with challenging behaviour and practice that did not reflect the planning or meet the needs of the pupils. There is a need for senior management to monitor regularly the teaching and planning of the teachers.
- The senior management need to provide greater opportunities for the co-ordinators to observe lessons throughout the school and to promote the consistency of the high quality practice.
- The individual education plans (IEP) are well structured and facilitate progression. The learning and social targets set for pupils are appropriate and, in almost all lessons, nearly all pupils are achieving their targets.
- The provision for mathematics is effective with the majority of lessons observed planned well to include a good balance of group, individual and paired work; the lessons are at an appropriate level to enable the pupils to participate and learn from enjoyable tasks, and to transfer their learning into meaningful contexts. The teachers should make more effective use of information communication technology to support and enhance the pupils' learning.

- The pupils make good progress in literacy and, in most lessons observed, planning is well matched to the pupils' ability and level of understanding. The school has identified appropriately the need to update the literacy policies and action plans to ensure a greater consistency of approach in all lessons across the school.
- The pupils develop progressively during their time in school and make good progress towards transition to appropriate post school placements and training courses. Most of the senior pupils participate in appropriate work experience placements based on their interests. There are insufficient opportunities for the pupils to access impartial careers advice and guidance, to support them and their parents or carers to make informed career choices.
- The school is cleaned and presented to a high standard by the diligent support staff who take a full part in the life of the school and are an integral and valuable part of the school community.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is very good. The teaching and support staff provide a warm caring atmosphere which permeates throughout the school and promote high standards in the pupils' work and behaviour. There is a strong sense of pride in the school community which is supported by opportunities for the pupils to share learning time together during, for instance, the highly interactive assembly or the inclusion programme. They have very good opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and, through the school council, to contribute to decisions relating to the school; for example, the recent positive discipline initiative. The senior management should implement a schedule to review and update regularly all of the school policies and procedures.
- The school promotes healthy breaks and provides regular opportunities for the pupils to engage in energetic physical activity using effectively the good outdoor space for the pupils and visits to the sports centre by senior pupils that encourage them to adopt healthy lifestyles.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding pupils. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. During the inspection, the inspectors met with two separate groups of pupils. In discussions, the pupils spoke highly of their teachers and classroom assistants and the range of subjects and after school enrichment activities they enjoy such as ju-jitsu, sports, art and technology. The pupils stated that they feel safe and cared for in school and are aware of what to do if they have any worries about their safety or well-being.

7. Leadership and management

- The principal and senior management are reflective, have a measured approach and demonstrate a strong commitment and care for the whole school community. The principal has a clear vision for the educational direction for the work of the school that has been shared and discussed with staff and governors. He has appropriately restructured the management team with an additional member added and all teachers assuming a role in co-ordinating aspects of the curriculum.

- The co-ordinators have in place clear action plans with appropriate measures to prepare staff for the implementation of the plans. They are supported well by the vice-principal and senior management. It is important that all members of staff support the learning needs of the pupils by implementing the action plans without delay. The principal has appropriately identified the need to develop the culture of self evaluation to effectively monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning and the impact of the action plans.
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the parents, staff and school community can have a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated; the board of governors have well-developed and effective partnership and working relationships with the principal, exemplified by regular and systematic communication opportunities. They provide excellent support for the school and are effective in their challenge function regarding the quality of provision for the pupils.
- The current school development plan targets have been prioritised and associated action plans are in place. The staff should ensure that these plans are implemented and the outcomes monitored rigorously and reviewed continuously. It is appropriate that the senior management team has prioritised the development of literacy as a key area for development and has begun to audit the school community in preparation for the new school development planning cycle.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is good. The school has important strengths in most of its education and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address. The areas for improvement include the need to:

- ensure that action plans are implemented without delay and the outcomes rigorously monitored and reviewed continuously; and
- ensure that there is consistently effective teaching in all classes throughout the school.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the school's progress on the areas for improvement.

Accommodation

1. The area at the back of the main school is very spacious and difficult to monitor effectively. The provision of an additional security camera at the rear of the building could enable staff to more effectively monitor the safety and security of children in this area.

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