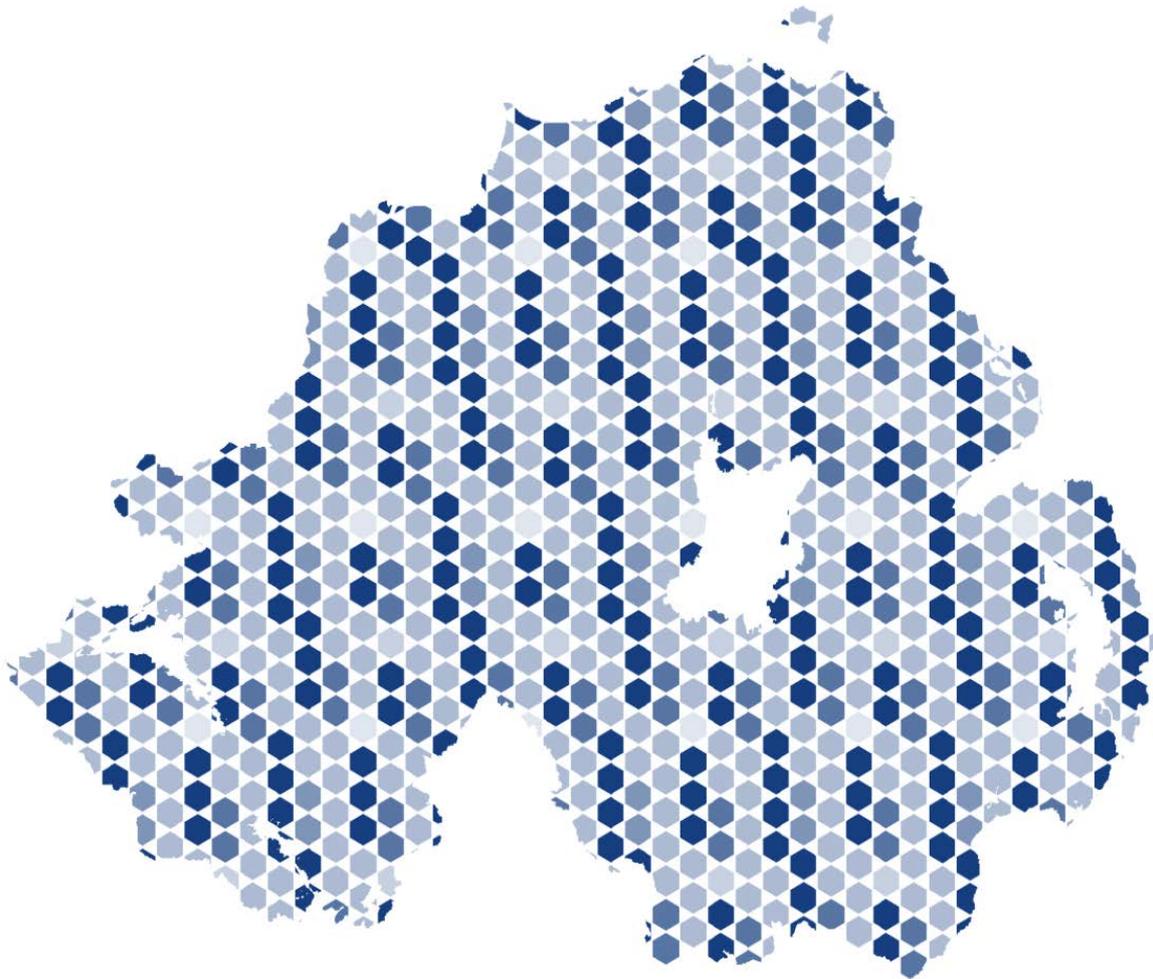


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Lurgan Junior High School

Controlled 11-14 all-ability school

Report of an Inspection
in May 2016

eti

The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing Inspection Services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
Department for Communities

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 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.

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1. Inspection method and evidence base

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of post-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-post-primary.htm>.

Inspectors observed learning and teaching, scrutinised documentation, data and the pupils' written work and held formal and informal discussions with pupils (individually and in groups), teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included a meeting with representatives from the governors and the opportunity for all parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential online questionnaire.

Prior to the inspection, 6% of parents (35) and 65% of staff (42) responded to the online questionnaire. Most of the parents expressed satisfaction with the leadership of the school and the way in which the staff support the health and well-being of the pupils. The parents commented in particular on the effective arrangements to support the pupils when they enter year 8 and on the extensive extra-curricular offer. The staff value the collegiality within the school and the development opportunities provided; they expressed their frustration, however, about lack of adequate resourcing. Parental issues concerning aspects of learning and teaching and communication were discussed (maintaining the confidentiality of the respondents) with representatives of the governors and the senior leaders.

2. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interests of all pupils, the purpose of inspection is, through effective linking of internal and external approaches, to:

- evaluate the quality of the provision and the outcomes for the pupils;
- evaluate the school's leadership and management and its capacity to effect and sustain improvement in its provision and standards; and
- inform the school's planning for improvement.

In addition to the focus on English/literacy and mathematics/numeracy, there was a supplementary subject focus on modern languages in this inspection.

3. Context

Lurgan Junior High School is an inclusive, all ability Key Stage (KS) 3 controlled school operating within the Craigavon area two-tier schooling system. While most of the pupils attending the school are from the town of Lurgan, the school also serves pupils from the surrounding areas, extending from Lurgan to Lisburn. On entry to year 8, most of the pupils have attained at or above the expected level in mathematics, and a majority of them have attained at or above the expected level in English. During the past four years, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and in the number of pupils identified as having an additional learning need. There has also been a marked rise in the number of newcomer pupils.

The principal was appointed in November 2015, having been in an acting capacity for the previous two years. At the time of inspection, there were a number of temporary staff and a number of middle and senior leaders in an acting capacity, including an acting vice-principal and two senior leaders in post for a fixed term.

Lurgan Junior High School	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Year 8 Intake	213	190	199	229
Enrolment	615	578	602	618
% Attendance (NI Average see below)	93.2 (92.9)	93.5 (92.0)	93 (N/A)	N/A (N/A)
FSME Percentage ¹	13.7	12.6	22.3	23.5
% (No.) of pupils on the SEN register	13.0 (80)	21.5 (124)	20.0 (120)	20.4 (126)
No. of pupils with statements of educational need	20	17	19	24
No. of newcomers	7	23	35	45
<i>Intake²:</i>				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	31.0	6.8	#	#
% of Y8 pupils with L5 mathematics	43.7	9.0	#	#
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in English	83.1	72.6	#	#
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in mathematics	85.0	75.8	#	#

Source: data as held by the school.

N/A not available

#: Data unavailable due to industrial action in some primary schools.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Important areas for improvement
Achievements and standards	Good
Provision for learning	Important areas for improvement
Leadership and management	Important areas for improvement

5. Achievements and standards

- The pupils are courteous, engage willingly with visitors and display a readiness to learn. They develop well teamwork, resilience and self-discipline through their successful participation in a wide range of sporting, music and drama activities. They work effectively in pairs and groups. Across the provision, opportunities for all pupils to develop further their oral communication skills and for them to develop, apply and articulate their thinking are not consistent or challenging enough. Overall, there is too much variation in the accuracy, quality and general presentation of the pupils' written work across the curriculum.

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

² From 2013, KS2 standards in English and mathematics are reported as Levels of Progression in Communication and Using Mathematics and cannot be compared directly with KS2 data from previous years

- Based upon an analysis of the data provided by the school, a majority (69%) of pupils achieve good standards in English/communication by the end of KS 3. The school's analysis of the data shows an improving trend among the boys, where the percentage attaining at level 5 or above has increased by ten percentage points in the past three years. This upward trend needs to be sustained and built upon. The pupils can write in a variety of forms using appropriate structure and are developing well independent reading skills. In group and class discussions, most of them offer clear reasons to justify ideas and opinions.
- The standards attained by the pupils in mathematics are good and this is reflected in the progress they make in using mathematics across KS 3. The pupils are motivated, show an enjoyment of learning and applying mathematical skills, and are developing to good effect mathematical oracy skills in small groups and pairs. They work well independently. The standard of work in the pupils' books is mostly of a good quality.
- Overall, the standards attained by the pupils in modern languages are good. Most of the pupils engage positively and enthusiastically with their learning; they enjoy practical activities, use a range of resources and collaborate well in pairs and groups. The pupils can reflect on and improve their work, and make connections in their learning across topics. The pupils' responses, however, are at times limited and lacking in confidence; they would benefit from further and more consistent opportunities to develop and extend their oral and written responses.
- The school's analysis of performance data indicates that the pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning make good progress by the end of KS 3.

6. Provision for learning

- Most (76%) of the lessons observed were effective (good or better) in promoting and progressing the pupils' learning; some 26% of the lessons observed were highly effective (very good). In the highly effective practice, lessons are well structured and paced, with high expectations for all and work matched well to the range of abilities within the class. The teachers: appropriately reinforce, consolidate and build on prior learning to ensure progression; establish very clear success criteria; engage pupils actively and creatively, including through effective and purposeful group work; and use skilful questioning to develop their thinking and extend their oral responses.
- The less effective practice (important areas for improvement or below), in slightly more than one-quarter (26%) of the lessons observed, is characterised by: insufficient differentiation and levels of challenge in the planning and delivery of the lessons to meet the learning needs of all of the pupils; limited opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their knowledge, understanding and skills in meaningful and engaging contexts; and over-direction by the teachers resulting in some pupil disengagement and passivity. It is concerning that, within the lower class bands in particular, there was less effective practice in a significant minority of the lessons observed. It will be important, through the dissemination of the most effective classroom practice, to improve the consistency of the pupils' learning experiences across the bands and throughout the school.

- Assessment for learning strategies are not developed consistently enough across the school to assess, consolidate and progress the pupils' learning; furthermore, the effectiveness and impact of marking for improvement is not monitored robustly enough within and across all areas of the curriculum. The teachers do not make sufficient use of tracking data to inform planning for learning. As a consequence, the pupils are not being challenged appropriately. Class teachers need to monitor and evaluate the standards the pupils attain within classes and bands, across year groups and, as they progress through the school, at departmental and whole-school level.
- The provision for learning in English is an important area for improvement. Just under 60% of the lessons observed were effective, as characterised by well-planned and paced lessons which focus on developing the pupils' thinking and oral skills through purposeful group and paired work. By contrast, in the less effective practice, in just over 40% of the lessons observed, the teachers' questioning does not require extensive responses from the pupils and there are missed opportunities to promote their reading and research skills. The teachers need to disseminate better the very effective practice that exists in the department to improve further the learning experiences for all of the pupils and the standards attained by them.
- There has been a clear focus on raising the profile of literacy across the school, supported by appropriate staff development. This work is having a positive impact in some areas of the curriculum, contributing well to the development of pupils' writing and talking and listening skills and now needs to be more consistently developed and embedded across all areas of the curriculum.
- The provision for learning in mathematics is an important area for improvement. In the effective practice, in two-thirds of the lessons observed, a range of assessment for learning strategies, including skilful questioning, are employed well to confirm learning and to extend the pupils' thinking. In the less effective provision, in one-third of the lessons observed, there is: over-direction by the teacher; insufficient challenge to meet the needs of all pupils; missed opportunities to set the learning in meaningful real-life contexts; and insufficient time for constructive plenary sessions. Planning does not identify enough opportunities for pupils to problem-solve and think critically and the range of experiences in the mathematics programme of study is too narrow. However, the department has recognised these as important areas to focus on going forward.
- Numeracy is promoted well through informative Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) events and some well-planned opportunities for the pupils to use and apply their numeracy skills in other areas of the curriculum. Overall, however, there are insufficient opportunities for the pupils to develop and apply numeracy skills across the curriculum. The provision of these opportunities, as recognised by the school, will need to be monitored closely, including: a review of how progression is mapped; and evaluating more rigorously the impact of the numeracy provision on the pupils' skills development and application.

- The provision for learning in modern languages is good. The teachers create a supportive learning environment and work hard to develop the pupils' wider awareness and appreciation of languages. They model effectively the target language and use suitably a range of resources, including information and communication technology (ICT), to support and enhance the learning and teaching. Most of the lessons observed were effective in promoting and progressing learning. In the most effective practice, the teachers build successfully upon the pupils' prior learning and support and challenge them appropriately to develop and extend their thinking and responses. In the less effective practice, there are limited opportunities to develop the pupils' oral responses, and the focus is on the activity rather than the learning.
- The quality of the provision for the care and support of the pupils is effective. The school motto 'Self respect, respect for others and responsibility for all your actions' is clearly reflected in the caring, pupil-centred ethos and exemplified by the high quality working relationships across the school. The school has developed appropriately the student voice, enabling the pupils through the student council to inform whole-school policies and to begin to evaluate their own learning. In addition, the pupils value, and benefit from, an extensive programme of after-school activities. A particular strength of the provision is the school's support for pupils at risk of marginalisation through, for example, a mentoring programme with an external agency and the nurturing youth annex. This ensures their fullest inclusion in the life and work of the school and develops well their personal and social skills.
- The pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning benefit from well-planned opportunities to develop their independence and inter-personal skills. The core support team contribute effectively to the delivery and review of the pupils' learning programmes. A key strength of the provision is the developing use of ICT to support effectively the pupils in their learning. While a range of withdrawal support activities is in place, which targets appropriately low and underachievement, it is not monitored robustly enough to measure the impact and ensure a greater level of consistency in the pupils' learning experiences. The individual education plans set out clearly the pupils' strengths and support needs, although the quality of the targets and strategies and how well they are used to inform the teachers planning varies too much. The school has prioritised appropriately the need to: develop further the teachers' role and engagement with the individual education planning process to better inform learning and teaching across the school; and monitor more rigorously the pupils' progress.
- The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced to meet the interests, aspirations and abilities of most of the pupils; it provides the pupils with good opportunities to undertake a suitable range of subjects, including discrete science subjects in year 10. In the ongoing review of the curriculum, the school must ensure that the impact of changes to the curriculum is monitored and reviewed, regularly and robustly, to ensure that these are meeting effectively the needs of all of the pupils.

- The careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) programme is delivered effectively through timetabled careers classes across all year groups. The classes, underpinned by a programme of guest speakers and STEM events, enable most of the pupils to: enhance their understanding of the career options available to them; and make informed decisions about the learning pathway that makes best use of their talents and interests and supports them in achieving their ambitions. Good progress has been made in integrating the careers programme into most of the subject areas across the school. The school is piloting an online tool that supports well the further development of the pupils' decision-making skills and the compilation of a personal career plan. The year 10 pupils, and their parents, have appropriate access to careers advisors both on a one-to-one and group basis. Importantly, there are appropriate links with the schools that the pupils progress to at the end of KS 3.

7. Leadership and management

- The principal has recently been appointed, having previously been in an acting capacity for two years. During that period, there has been a well-conceived and ongoing re-structuring of the senior executive team. Roles and responsibilities are not clearly enough defined as yet, at all levels, to ensure there is sufficient accountability. This has been recognised by the senior leaders and the governors and the leadership structure in the school is in a period of ongoing and necessary transition.
- The senior executive team has an appropriate, shared vision for school improvement which is clearly articulated. In particular, their introduction of a team approach to the leadership and management of priority areas of the school development plan³ has been an important and strategic development, engaging to good effect the middle leaders and teaching staff. There is emerging evidence of ongoing improvements in the areas identified in the current school development plan, including: addressing the underachievement of boys; and developing further the use of tracking and reporting systems to monitor pupil progression.
- The effectiveness of the action planning process is an important area for improvement. Action planning, at all levels, does not include sufficiently specific and measurable targets, informed by rigorous self-evaluation which is underpinned by qualitative and quantitative measures of performance, in order to effect improvement. In their areas of responsibility, not all middle leaders monitor and evaluate systematically and rigorously enough to ensure: priority actions are adequately progressing, not only those identified priorities for their areas of responsibility, but also the shared whole-school priorities; and that all actions are focused on realising the required improvement in the learning experiences for the pupils, and the standards they achieve.
- The governors are well-informed about the life and work of the school; they have a very good range of complementary skills and carry out their roles conscientiously. Importantly, they are committed to taking a more active role in monitoring and evaluating the quality of the learning experiences and the standards attained by pupils throughout the school. Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the parents, staff and school community can have confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated.

³ The school development plan meets the requirements of the School Development Planning Regulations (NI) 2010.

- 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. The school needs to review and further secure access to the site. The pupils reported that they feel safe in school and know what to do if they are concerned about their safety or well-being.

8. Overall effectiveness

The school needs to address the important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement, which include the need to:

- improve the quality of planning, teaching and assessment in order to promote more successful learning; and
- increase accountability at all levels, through establishing clearly defined roles and responsibilities and monitoring and evaluating more systematically the quality of the provision and outcomes.

There will be a formal follow-up inspection in 12- 18 months.

Health and safety

1. The school needs to review urgently, through appropriate risk assessments and external support, the multiple unsecured access points to the school to ensure there is no risk to the safety of the pupils and the staff.

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