

A series of stylized, colorful paper figures holding hands in a line, set against a dark blue background with a bokeh light effect. The figures are in shades of blue, purple, and pink.

Report of a Primary Inspection

St Patrick's Primary School, Glen
DE Ref No 303-6292

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Education and
Training Inspectorate
Empowering Improvement

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1. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

St Patrick's Primary School, Glen, is a Catholic Maintained school that sits at the foot of the Sperrin Mountains on the Glenshane Pass, on the outskirts of Maghera town. It is a rural primary school that draws almost all of its children from the surrounding townlands of Maghera and is served by a dedicated Education Authority (EA) bus service. The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school programme.

The school has currently 165 children enrolled. A small number of the children have free school meals entitlement (FSME) and 12% of the children have been identified as having Special Education Needs (SEN). A Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools (SPiMS) class for children with social and communication difficulties in the early years and foundation stage (FS) was opened in September 2024.

St Patrick's Primary School, Glen has a well-established shared education partnership with a local controlled school. The school is currently working towards its [Forest School](#) accreditation and all of the staff have completed level 1 EA nurture training.

B. VIEWS OF PARENTS, LEARNERS AND STAFF

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) issued online confidential questionnaires to year 7 children and all staff and parents/carers in advance of the inspection.

All of the year 7 children completed the questionnaires and a significant minority of them provided written comments. Every child indicated that they feel safe in school and know who to speak to if they have any concerns. They reported that the teachers and assistants help them when they find it difficult to learn. All of the children indicated that the school council works to improve aspects of school life and they are all involved in clubs and after-school activities, including, drama, music, games or sports. In their written comments, the children described their school as 'amazing' and that 'everyone in our school is so kind'.

Thirty-seven percent of the parents/carers responded to the online questionnaire, over one-half of whom provided additional written comments. All of the parents/carers reported that they know about the school's vision/aims and know how to report a safeguarding/child protection concern. They also indicated that the staff support their child if they experience any difficulties with their learning, and that their child has opportunities to take part in activities/visits outside the classroom. In their written comments, the parents/carers spoke of the 'lovely learning environment' and that the 'staff are totally dedicated'.

The teaching and support staff responses were very positive. In their written comments, the staff highlighted their enjoyment of working together, the joy of teaching the children and, the dedication and leadership of the principal.

A summary of all the questionnaire responses, including a small number of concerns and positive suggestions from respondents, was shared with the principal and five representatives from the board of governors.

C. THE PROCESS OF INSPECTION

The ETI worked alongside St Patrick's Primary School, Glen to consider how well the school:

- has identified and articulates its vision;
- prioritises actions to achieve the vision;
- overcomes the main challenges it faces;
- monitors and reviews progression to define, celebrate and embed success; and
- grows and develops an inclusive community of learning.

2. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- The school's vision, 'roots to grow, wings to fly', is shared, understood and lived out by all of the school community, where every child is loved, respected and empowered to reach their full potential.
- In line with the school's Catholic ethos, the principal's servant leadership is modelled by the staff, who greet each child warmly, fostering a strong sense of community and readiness to learn.
- Self-evaluation processes are identifying accurately the priorities for development. The school is well placed in moving from a one-year transitional plan to a three-year school development plan (SDP).
- The governors are highly invested in the life and work of the school. They are dedicated to the school's vision and ethos, and provide effective support and constructive challenge to the leadership.
- The children benefit from high-quality numeracy provision, characterised by rich opportunities to develop problem-solving, reasoning and logic within meaningful, real-life contexts.
- The children write with increasing fluency, accuracy and independence across a range of meaningful contexts, showing a clear understanding of purpose and audience.
- The staff have worked effectively on planning for numeracy and writing, and have identified appropriately the need to develop further planning across the curriculum to ensure greater coherence and progression.

- The children are confident, articulate and independent learners who achieve well in a nurturing and inclusive environment that celebrates their holistic development and achievements.
- There is a wholly inclusive Catholic ethos in the school in which diversity and difference are respected, valued and celebrated. Children who have been identified as having special educational needs are supported very well in their learning by the highly skilled teachers and classroom assistants and are making significant progress in their learning and development.
- A range of well-established and co-ordinated partnerships, including with parents, the parish, the local GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) club and with other schools are impacting very positively on the children's holistic experiences and outcomes.
- At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the school demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance.

Area for action:

- to review the whole-school planning across the curriculum to ensure greater coherence and progression in the children's learning.

3. MAIN REPORT

A. SETTING THE VISION

St Patrick's Primary School, Glen, strives to meet its vision of 'Roots to grow, wings to fly' within a happy and caring environment where children are loved, respected and provided with opportunities to develop their full potential academically, socially and in the formation of their faith. The school's vision and values are fully understood by the children, parents, staff, governors and the local community and are reflected in the high expectations for every child. There are positive, respectful and empathetic interactions between staff and children. Every morning, the principal and staff greet each child warmly, fostering a strong sense of community and readiness to learn.

The robust self-evaluation processes are identifying accurately the priorities for development and the principal and staff monitor and evaluate regularly the children's progress against these priorities. The school leadership is engaging currently in appropriate consultation with the school community and is well-placed to move from the one-year transitional development plan to a new three-year school development plan (SDP).

The governors are invested deeply in the life and work of the school and are highly committed to the school's vision and Catholic ethos. They have a strong affiliation to the school and are extremely proud of how its vision affects positively the children's holistic development and how well they achieve. The governors support the ongoing work of the school by providing effective support and constructive challenge to the school leadership.

B. IMPLEMENTING AND IMPROVING TO ACHIEVE THE VISION

The planning for numeracy is comprehensive, progressive and well-balanced and guides effectively the teachers in delivering high-quality learning and teaching in mathematics. Through self-evaluation, the staff have identified appropriately the need to replicate this high-quality planning across other areas of learning to promote greater coherence and strengthen progression across the curriculum, including more opportunities for investigative and enquiry-based learning. Most of the teaching observed was effective; in the most impactful practice, the teachers set high expectations and employed skilful questioning to deepen children's understanding and encourage them to articulate their thinking. Classroom assistants are valued members of the school team and make a purposeful and positive contribution to the children's learning. A recent focus in improving the quality of self- and peer-assessment is providing enhanced opportunities for the children to reflect more meaningfully on their learning. Assessment for learning strategies, in particular, written feedback to the children, could be strengthened further to provide clear guidance to the children on how to improve their work.

Problem-solving in numeracy is a significant strength of the school's provision. The children benefit from rich opportunities to develop their problem-solving skills, in particular, reasoning and logic, across the curriculum. Active learning within numeracy is well embedded, and meaningful, real-life contexts, such as, shopping activities in FS, measuring activities in key stage one (KS 1), and sorting out bin collection timetables in key stage two (KS 2), promote the children's engagement and mathematical thinking. Teachers plan effectively for connected learning in mathematics, enabling the children to recognise its relevance to everyday life.

Across the school, writing has been prioritised and is taught effectively, with grammar and punctuation embedded in meaningful contexts, such as, the use of imperative verbs in instructional writing and time connectives in recounts. Topics and themes are used well to provide relevant and engaging contexts, resulting in the children writing with increasing fluency, accuracy, and independence. The staff promote well the development of children's talking and listening through a language-rich environment where the children's ideas and opinions are valued and respected.

The recent focus on outdoor learning, including [Forest School](#), enhances the FS curriculum and provides intentional learning opportunities for the children to develop their curiosity, language development, problem-solving and leadership skills through purposeful, hands-on experiences. The staff have identified appropriately the need to increase the provision for outdoor learning, including STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) development, across all key stages to build further on this strong foundation.

The staff are proactive in supporting the children's emotional health and well-being through, for example, the 'Wellbeing Wednesday' initiative. In discussions with the children, they told inspectors that they helped design the 'Wellbeing Wednesday' programme, including the identification of topics that would support positively their emotional health and well-being. The focus on healthy bodies and healthy minds through the EA's programme, ['Being well, doing well'](#) helps to facilitate a balanced approach to physical activity, nutrition, and emotional resilience.

Beyond the core curriculum, the integration of extra- and co-curricular clubs and after-school activities provides the children with enriching opportunities to develop their social skills, confidence and physical fitness. There are a range of appropriate policies to support the school's safeguarding practices; the school has identified appropriately the need to map the preventative curriculum across year groups to enhance consistency, coverage and progression.

C. BUILDING EQUITY

Diversity and difference are respected, valued and celebrated by all in this wholly welcoming, inclusive, supportive and secure environment. All children with SEN, within each class, in the 'Rainbow Room' and in alternative placement, are cared for and supported to reach their full potential and are important members of the whole-school community. The high-quality provision for SEN is characterised by the strategic, coordinated and collaborative approach to identifying, at an early stage, the barriers faced by individual children and to putting in place a range of impactful interventions which support the children to access fully the curriculum, develop their social skills, grow in confidence and experience success.

The children, their parents, teachers and classroom assistants all make meaningful contributions to the personal education plans, the targets within which are tailored to the needs of each individual child, are reviewed and adapted appropriately, and guide very well the learning and teaching. Classroom assistants play an integral role in supporting learning and teaching across the school; they are proud, valued and skilled members of the school community who avail of ongoing professional learning opportunities specific to their role and to the needs of the children whom they support.

Partnerships with a range of professionals, such as a school counsellor, educational psychologists, occupational therapists and speech and language therapists, support the teaching and support staff very well in meeting the needs of individual children. In discussions with a group of parents, they spoke of their delight in the progression of their children in school and how the strategies being taught also impact positively their lives at home.

D. DEFINING, CELEBRATING AND EMBEDDING SUCCESS

The staff recognise that success begins in the classroom, where they use regular observations and 'at the elbow' support to monitor children's progress and respond effectively to their individual needs. Assessment of learning is rigorous and used very well to track the children's progress.

The children are confident, respectful, and work well individually and collaboratively. They show high levels of emotional literacy and are able to talk about their emotions and feelings within a nurturing and inclusive environment. From the FS, the children communicate with adults and each other with increasing confidence and use an expanding vocabulary to express their ideas, opinions and feelings.

Most of the children write with fluency, accuracy, and growing independence across a range of forms, including digital media, and have a sound understanding of genre and audience. The children apply a range of reading and spelling strategies with increasing independence and achieve well in literacy.

In numeracy, the children achieve a high standard in problem-solving. By the end of KS 2 they work systematically, articulate their thinking with confidence, and apply their mathematical understanding in real-life contexts.

The school makes effective use of digital tools, including an online application and the school website, to strengthen home-school communication and celebrate children's achievements. This is further enhanced by well-embedded whole-school systems that value and affirm success, including themed events, regular class assemblies and curated portfolios that document each child's educational achievements. The school's recent recognition through a wide range of awards across sport, the arts, engineering and pastoral care reflects a strong commitment to excellence and the holistic development of the children. During the inspection, the children told inspectors that they have opportunities to celebrate their achievements, attained within and outside of school, during class time and in assemblies. The children performed for the inspection team, with great joy, enthusiasm and to a high standard, some of their traditional music and dance routines used in recent competitions.

E. GROWING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNING

Open, honest and warm relationships, a culture of togetherness and a shared commitment to the children underpin the work of all the staff within the school.

There is extensive evidence of a wide range of partnerships that have been built and continue to be nurtured with the local and wider community that are impacting positively on the holistic experiences of the children. The school is an integral part of its local community and parish. The children and their parents are supported very well by their parish church in sacramental preparation and the children have opportunities to develop a sense of civic responsibility through, for example, singing at a local care home and their involvement with [St Vincent de Paul](#).

The children from year 1 to year 7 benefit greatly from the engaging, enjoyable and comprehensive physical activity programme that is funded by a local GAA club and supports well the development of the children's movement, balance, co-ordination and game skills while also building their resilience and decision-making skills. The programme also supports the professional learning of the staff in the school.

Partnerships with other local primary schools, pre-schools and post-primary schools are very well-developed and provide a wealth of opportunities for staff professional learning and the sharing of good practice. These partnerships are also utilised to very good effect to support children and their families at key transition points in their educational journey. Year 6 children, for example, visit the local pre-school to meet the children with whom they will 'buddy' in the year 7/year 1 buddy-scheme, and children from the pre-school are welcomed into the school for special events during the school year. In discussions with the year 7 children, they reported that they

enjoy 'buddying' with the year 1 children and that it aids them in developing leadership skills while helping the younger children to feel part of the school community. There is also a well-considered transition programme in place with the local post-primary school to which most children transfer; the children benefit from a range of transition activities such as physical education programmes, sports and tournaments, and visits to see musicals.

F. CHILD PROTECTION

At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the school demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance. In discussions with the children, they reported that they feel safe in school and online, and know who to talk to should they have any worries or concerns.

4. GOING FORWARD

St Patrick's Primary School, Glen, is a very caring and inclusive school at the heart of the community where children are loved, respected and provided with opportunities to develop 'roots to grow, wings to fly'.

Through the work of the district inspector, ETI will monitor how the school addresses the area for action.

Inspectors also identified an area of highly effective practice from which others may learn. The aspect of practice which should be shared more widely includes:

- the well-considered and intentional approaches to promoting inclusion and integration enabling the children to overcome barriers, grow in confidence and experience success.

5. APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1: 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



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