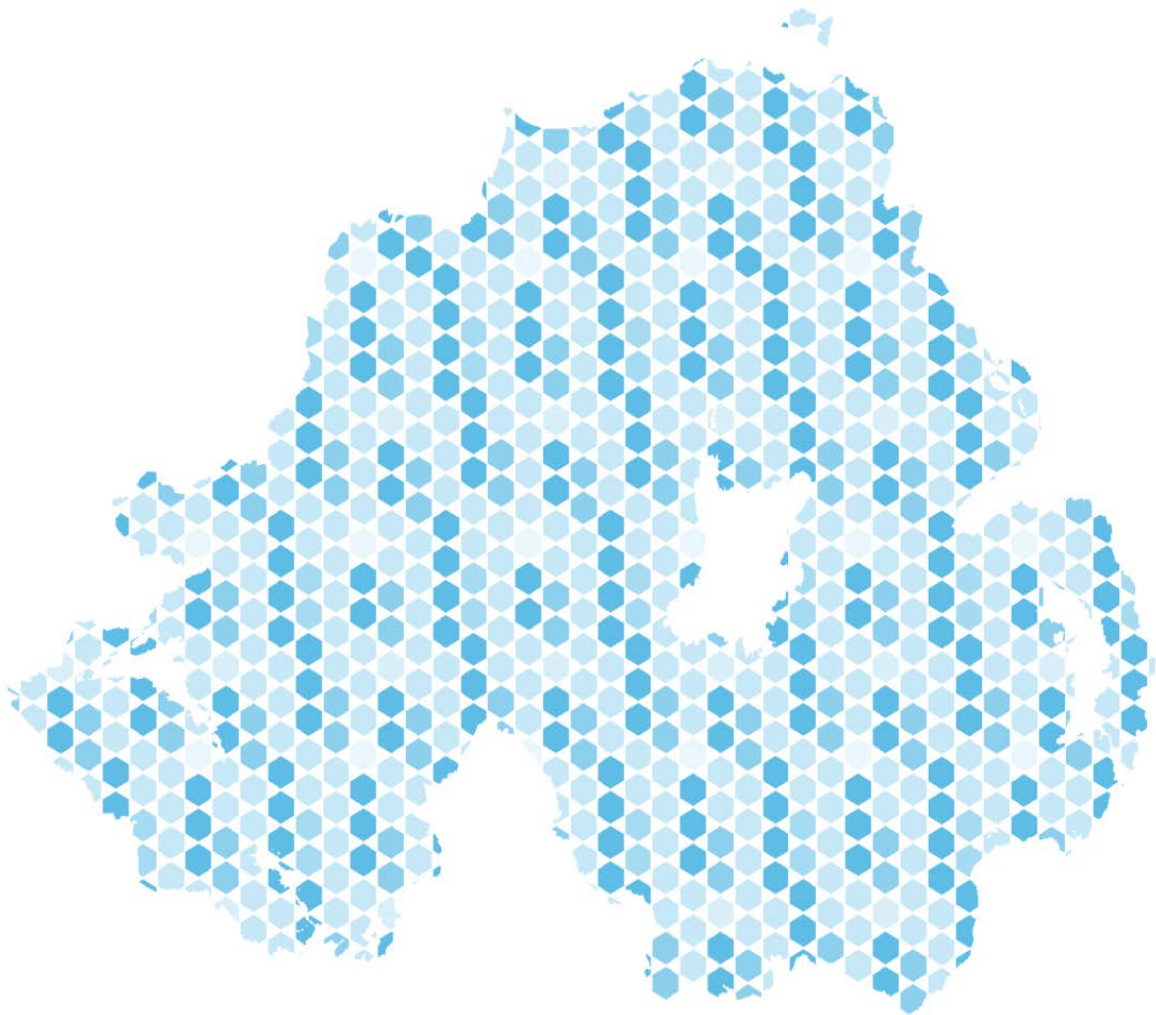


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Magherafelt Primary School,
Co Londonderry

Report of an Inspection
in May 2013



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Inspection methods and evidence base

The inspection evaluations are based on evidence gained from lesson observations, from scrutiny of the children's completed written work and from a range of documentation including the school's internal performance data. In addition, the inspection team held discussions with groups of the children, with teaching and non-teaching staff and with representatives from the Board of Governors.

The views of the parents, teaching and non-teaching staff were sought through a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. The reporting inspector discussed any issues raised through the questionnaires with the principal and the governors. A summary of the outcomes from the questionnaires is included in section 6 of the report.

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%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

1. School context

Magherafelt Primary School is situated on the Castledawson Road in Magherafelt, County Londonderry. The school moved to a new building in December 2012 approximately 1.5 miles away from the previous site, which the school had occupied for over 50 years, and shares the new site with Magherafelt Nursery School. The school enrolment has decreased over the past five years, from 301 in 2008 to the current enrolment of 246. At the time of the inspection 27% of the children were entitled to free school meals and 20% of the children in the school were identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

2. Focus of inspection and overall finding

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, including the arrangements for child protection.

In addition, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning, and the school's arrangements for pastoral care were evaluated.

OVERALL FINDING OF THE INSPECTION

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

Summary of key findings

Achievements and standards Quality of provision Leadership and management	Very Good Good Good
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KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

3. Achievements and standards

The quality of the children's achievements and standards is very good.

- At the Foundation Stage (FS) the children enjoy a play based curriculum and are able to talk about what they have learned, be creative, investigative and imaginative. Throughout the school the children are highly motivated and display very positive attitudes to their learning; almost all engage readily and

enthusiastically in all of their lessons and take pride in their work. Most of the children work collaboratively in pairs and small groups, listening and responding appropriately to the views of others. As they progress through the school, they are developing well their independence and their ability to manage aspects of their own learning.

- An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data over the past four years shows that in three of the four years the school's performance in English and mathematics is above the Northern Ireland (NI) average and above the average for schools in the same free school meals band.
- The school's internal performance data indicates that by the end of KS2 most of the children are achieving standards in mathematics and English in line with their ability or better than expected. By year 7, the children have a very good recall and understanding of the important mathematical concepts across all the areas of mathematics. They complete simple and more complex mental calculations with confidence and are able to explain their methods, but are reticent when asked to offer alternative strategies. They are able to apply their mathematical knowledge to challenging practical problem-solving and investigative activities. By year 7, most of the children attain very good standards in literacy, they express themselves confidently and articulately, participate well in class discussion, read with fluency and write competently for a range of audiences and purposes.
- The children in the school who have been identified as requiring help with aspects of their learning make good progress. Most of the children are working in line with their ability and reach standards of which they are capable.
- The children from years 4 and 7 participate in the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) ICT Accreditation Scheme and have attained standards which are above the NI average.

4. Provision for learning

The quality of the provision for learning is good.

- The staff use a common format for medium term planning: they have appropriately identified the need to develop their planning further in order to meet the needs of all of the children and promote greater coherence and progression in the children's learning experiences.
- The quality of the teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to very good. In the majority of lessons it was good or very good; in almost one quarter of the teaching observed there were areas for improvement. In the best practice the teacher's expectations are realistically high, the teaching is well structured and tasks are set in meaningful contexts which engage the children actively and develop effectively their thinking skills and personal capabilities. In the less effective teaching the learning is over-directed by the teacher and the activities are insufficiently matched to the range of the children's abilities and interests. The teachers mark the children's work regularly and supportively. In the best practice, the feedback focuses on how the children can improve the quality and standard of their work. The teachers need to share and develop the most effective practice more widely across the school.

- In the Foundation Stage and KS1, the children acquire the basic skills of reading through a structured phonics programme and modelled, shared and guided reading activities. Most of the children are interested in and enjoy their reading and talk enthusiastically about the wide range of authors, composers and literature that they enjoy. Talking and listening is promoted effectively in a majority of the classes. The standards of the children's writing could be improved further with a wider range of more open-ended contexts for writing and a reduced emphasis on the use of work-sheets, in order to foster the children's creativity and to provide greater challenge. The whole school scheme of work for mathematics provides a detailed overview for the development of the children's learning across all of the areas of mathematics. The school has focused over a number of years, on the area of problem-solving and the children benefit from meaningful, challenging investigative activities, particularly in KS2. There is now a need for a more coherent approach to the development of mental mathematics skills and the children need more opportunities to discuss their strategies in order to develop more flexibility in their mathematical thinking. Throughout the school, good use is being made of ICT to support learning in both Literacy and mathematics.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is good; this is characterised, for example, by the caring and supportive ethos, the exemplary behaviour of the children and the opportunities for the children to participate in a range of extra-curricular activities which develop their skills and interests. The opportunities for the school council to participate in decision-making needs to be developed further.
- The provision for special educational needs is good. Those children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified at an early age and benefit from additional provision, through in-class support or the withdrawal sessions by a part-time teacher. This provision is matched well to the children's needs and their work in class and has a positive impact on their self-esteem and learning.
- The school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity through the promotion of healthy break-time routines and curriculum activities.

5. Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management is good.

- The Principal and the wider management team have managed effectively the challenges and uncertainty presented over a prolonged period by the decreasing enrolment and the recent transition to the new school building. The curriculum coordinators have made a useful start in the use of internal performance data to help them to begin to evaluate the quality of the provision and to identify, at an early stage, those children who are underachieving in literacy and numeracy or require additional support with aspects of their learning. Due to recent changes to staffing, it is timely that the Principal is 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.

- As the school enters a new development plan cycle, the leadership team needs to develop further the self evaluation procedures: to include more meaningful consultation with the children and the parents; and, to ensure that sufficiently challenging and appropriate priorities for development are identified which will raise further the quality of the provision and the standards attained by the children. The current action plans and monitoring methods require additional detail and rigour to guide sufficiently the development work of the school: they need to focus more sharply on the actions which will bring about continued improvement in the children's learning; and, to include systematic and effective methods for monitoring and evaluation.
- There are appropriate procedures in place to keep the parents informed about their children's progress and the life and work of the school: including an induction booklet for year 1 parents; a formal consultation; a website; regular news sheets; and, a text messaging service. In addition, the school operates an open-door policy for meetings with parents. The school has established good links with a range of other schools and agencies to enhance the learning opportunities for the children.
- 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 governors are well informed about the achievements and standards within the school and are engaged in decisions in relation to staffing and finances. Their contribution to the life and work of the school could be further enhanced through the monitoring of the processes for self evaluation and the outcomes from the specific actions undertaken to improve further the quality of learning and teaching.
- 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 (DE) but the following minor areas need to be addressed:
 - ensure that the governors, parents and children are consulted in the review and development of new policies and procedures; and
- ensure that there are clear records in place regarding staff training.

CONCLUSION

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

- to develop further the school's self evaluation procedures: to include the use of systematic and effective methods for monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision; and, to strengthen further the role of the co-ordinators to provide strategic leadership and lead development and improvement in their respective areas of the curriculum.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor, through district inspection activity, the school's progress on the area for improvement.

6. Summary of questionnaire responses

PARENTAL QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Issued to the school and nursery unit (Based on 09/10 Enrolment)	126
Number of Questionnaires Returned	66
Percentage of Returns	52.38%
Number of Comments	30

Almost all of the responses from the parental questionnaires indicated a high level of satisfaction with the provision in the school. In their written comments, the parents valued the school's positive ethos, the friendly, helpful and approachable staff, and highlighted in particular that their children are very happy and well settled. The small number of issues raised has been discussed with the Principal and governors.

In discussions with the governors, they paid tribute to the hard-working Principal and staff. They strongly support the Principal in providing a broad educational and pastoral education for the children through child-centred provision. They reported that they are well-informed about the life and work of the school. They spoke of the challenges the school has faced over the past number of years with changes in enrolment and staffing but feel also the move to the new build presents new opportunities for the future.

TEACHERS QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Returned	9
Number of Comments	*

SUPPORT STAFF QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Returned	6
Number of Comments	*

* denotes less than five

Nine of the teachers and six of the support staff completed the questionnaire. All of the staff indicated that they are very happy in their work.

The inspectors also met with a group of the year 6 children. The children spoke positively about their enjoyment of school: their lessons and of the extra-curricular activities available, for example, the cookery club, choir and sports. They indicated that they feel safe and happy in school and know what to do if they have any worries or concerns about their well-being.

Accommodation

- There is a need for a risk assessment to be carried out with regard to the proximity of the main road to the grounds and car park now that the school is on the new site.

BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. School: Magherafelt Primary iii. Date of Inspection: W/B 13/05/13
 ii. School Reference Number: 301-2267 iv. Nature of Inspection: Focused

B.

School Year	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Year 1 Intake	36	37	32	33	32
Enrolments					
Primary	301	283	271	252	246
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Special Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Irish Medium Unit	0	0	0	0	0

The enrolment for the current year is the figure on the day of notification of inspection. For previous years it is the figure in the annual return to the Department of Education.

The calculations at C and D are based on the total of the primary and reception enrolments only.

- C. Average Attendance for the Previous School Year (expressed as a percentage): 96.2% NI Avg Att: 94.7%

Average Attendance for those children on the Special Educational Needs Register: 94.58%

	Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit	Irish Medium Unit
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- D. i. Number of Teachers (including the principal and part-time teachers): 10 0 0 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)

ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 24.6 NI PTR: 20.2

iii. Average Class Size: 27

iv. Class Size (Range): 25 to 31

v. Ancillary Support:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|--|-------|
| Number of Hours Per Week: | i. Clerical support: | | 36 |
| | ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support: | | 32 |
| | iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | | 112.5 |

vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 2%

vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 20%

viii. Number of children who are not of statutory school age: 0

ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 27%

- x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2011/12 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics, and Irish (in Irish-medium schools):
- | | | | |
|--|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| | English
88.09% | Mathematics
90.47% | Irish
N/A |
|--|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------|

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