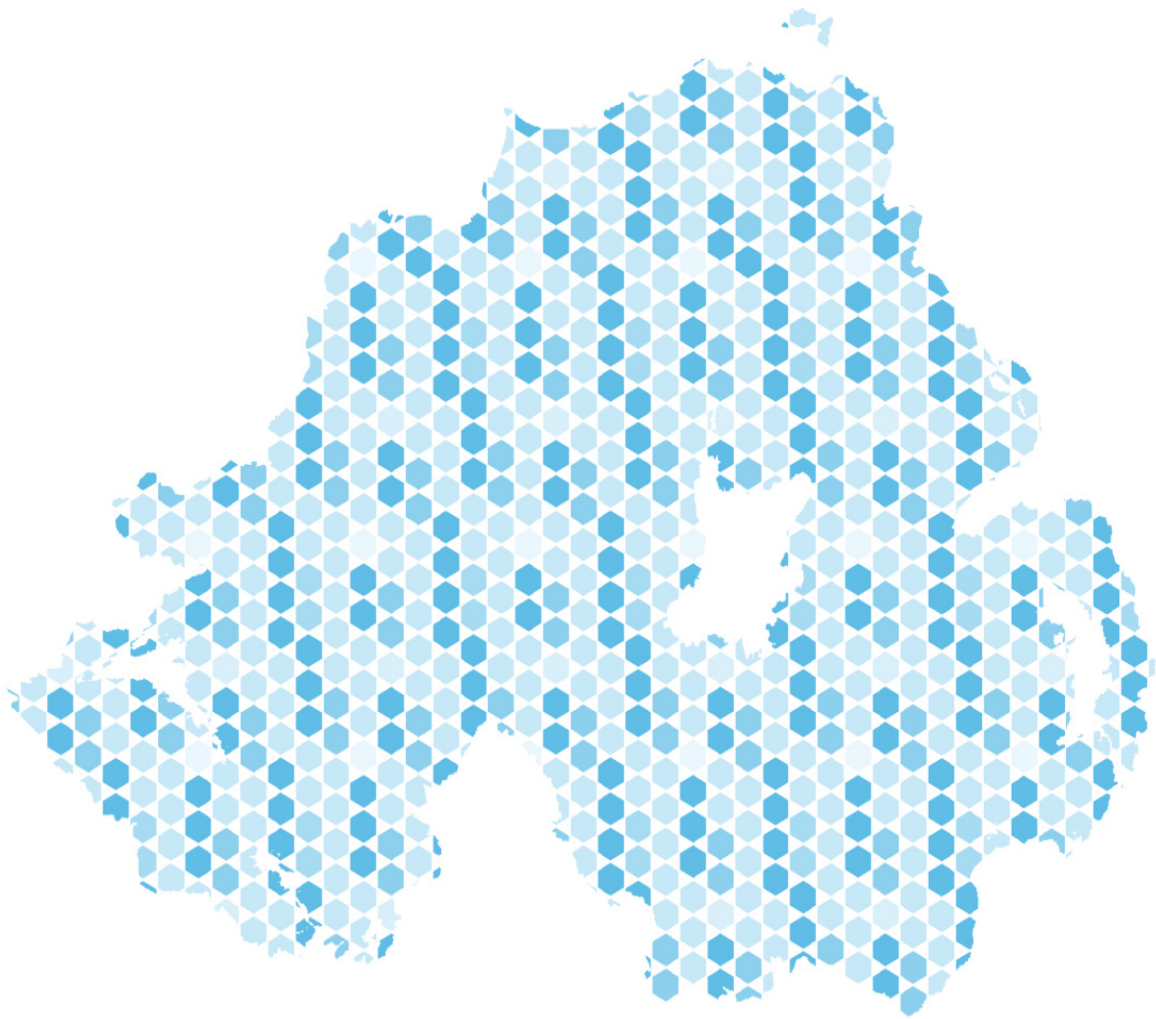


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Mary's Primary School,
Pomeroy

Report of an Inspection
in November 2011



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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

BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: St Mary's Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 07/11/11**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 503-6118** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Year 1 Intake	21	30	19	22	26
Enrolments					
Primary	172	181	166	163	165
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Special Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Irish Medium Unit	0	29	19	0	10

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 should be based on the total of the primary and reception enrolments only.

- C. Average Attendance for the Previous School Year (expressed as a percentage): 94.5% **NI Avg Att: 94.7%**
- Average Attendance for those children on the Special Educational Needs Register: 94.35%
- | | Primary & Reception | Nursery Unit | Special Unit | Irish Medium Unit |
|--|---------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
|--|---------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
- D. i. Number of Teachers (including the principal and part-time teachers): 8 0 0 1
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 18.3 NI PTR: 20.2
- iii. Average Class Size: 20.6
- iv. Class Size (Range): 10 to 26
- v. Ancillary Support:
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- | | |
|---|-------|
| i. Clerical support: | 31.25 |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support: | 40 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 18 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 6.6%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 13.3%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age:
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 38.7%
- x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2010/11 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics, and Irish (in Irish-medium schools):
- | | | | | | |
|----------------|--------|--------------------|--------|--------------|------|
| English | 68.19% | Mathematics | 68.18% | Irish | 100% |
|----------------|--------|--------------------|--------|--------------|------|

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT

St Mary's Primary School is situated in the village of Pomeroy, County Tyrone. The enrolment has remained steady in recent years and stands currently at 165, including ten children from years 3 to 7 in the Irish Medium Unit. There are thirteen Newcomer children and a few children from the Traveller community. At the time of the inspection, 38% of the children were entitled to free school meals (FSM). The school has identified approximately 22% of the children as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning, half of whom have statements of special educational needs. There is a development proposal to close the Irish Medium Unit (IMU) in August 2012.

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy;
- the quality of provision for learning; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

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

1.3 THE VIEWS OF THE PARENTS, TEACHERS, GOVERNORS, SUPPORT STAFF AND CHILDREN

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents and the teaching and support staff to complete confidential questionnaires prior to the inspection. Meetings were held with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors), and a group of children from year 6.

Of the 116 questionnaires issued to the parents 60% were returned to Inspection Services Branch and 25 contained additional written comments. Most of the responses indicated a very high level of satisfaction with and support for the school. The parents commented favourably on the care and support provided by the staff, the extra-curricular provision, the school's standing in the local community and expressed their appreciation of how the school has dealt with specific issues to their satisfaction. A minority of the parents raised concerns; these related to aspects of teaching and learning and communication. A few expressed their dissatisfaction at how a small number of specific issues have been addressed. In addition, a small number of parents expressed their regret at the closure of the IMU.

All of the teachers completed the online questionnaire and the returns were wholly positive. The few additional comments highlighted the strong sense of teamwork in the school with the children at the centre. Almost all of the support staff completed the questionnaire and commented favourably on almost all aspects of school life.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) shared an analysis of the questionnaires and comments made by the parents and the staff with the Principal and representatives of the governors.

The governors expressed their appreciation of the support for the school within the local community. They highlighted the commitment of the staff to the individual needs of each child and their confidence in the leadership of the Principal.

The year 6 children talked enthusiastically about the many aspects of school life they enjoy, including the sporting and other after school activities provided for them. They indicated that they feel safe and happy in school, and know what to do if they have any worries about their safety or well-being.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is very good. There is a supportive, inclusive ethos and all of the staff are committed to the care and well being of the children. The children are very welcoming and their behaviour is very good. Their work and achievements are celebrated through attractive displays and through whole school assemblies which are led by the children. The Newcomer children are well integrated into all aspects of school life and their languages and cultures are valued and celebrated.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect broadly the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The following areas need to be addressed:

- safeguarding awareness raising for new members of staff; and
- training on the recruitment and vetting of staff for all governors who sit on appointment panels.

1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, and to encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles. The school makes effective use of the outdoor space to provide the children with regular opportunities for energetic outdoor play. There is a high rate of participation among the children in sporting activities, including those organised through the Extended Schools Programme.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The school has prioritised the further development of the links with parents to enable them to support their children in their learning. The school values the contribution of the parents and seeks their views on a range of aspects through questionnaires. The children benefit from the additional funds raised by the parents/friends of the school support group, and the school has effective links with local businesses and the farming community to support and extend the children's learning experiences.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data indicates that in English and mathematics, over the past four years, the school's performance is consistently below the Northern Ireland average. When compared with schools in the same FSM category, the children's levels of attainment in English and mathematics are also below the average.

The school's internal data demonstrates that most of the children achieve standards that are in line with their abilities.

Throughout the school the children engage enthusiastically with their learning and demonstrate high levels of motivation, particularly during practical activities. They generally present their work neatly, cooperate and interact well with their peers in paired and group work and are keen to talk about their learning.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The quality of provision in English and literacy is good.

There is a broad and balanced approach to literacy, with a focus on cross-curricular activities, which is supported by a good whole school literacy scheme. Initiatives such as Guided Reading and Reading Partnership have been recently introduced to good effect.

The literacy coordinator provides very effective leadership. He prioritises the strategic objectives for the literacy action plans through staff audits, classroom observation and the effective analysis of qualitative and quantitative performance data.

The teachers plan well for sustained talking and listening across the curriculum and make good use of ICT and the school environment to develop literacy skills. The teaching of reading is well developed throughout the school. The school has appropriately identified planning as an area for development, in order to raise further the standards achieved by the children, especially in writing.

In the foundation stage (FS), the children's talking and listening is developed very well through play-based learning and effective interaction by both the teachers and the classroom assistants. The children are beginning to identify sounds, and read familiar words, for example, in self registering using their own names. They form letters and write simple sentences, and by the end of the FS, can create simple books using ICT and their own writing.

In KS1 the children listen well to each other, and engage enthusiastically in class and group discussions. The children's reading in KS1 is a strength; the most able children read with increasing fluency and expression. The children's writing is developed through modelled and shared writing and through fiction and non-fiction material. The children also make good use of ICT, including the internet and software programmes.

In KS2, the children discuss a wide range of topical, age-appropriate items with enthusiasm and maturity. The children's reading is of a high standard, and they are able to read non-familiar texts skilfully, and with expression and meaning. They write in a range of styles and for a variety of audiences and purposes across the curriculum.

The children in the IMU make good progress in Irish and in English.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The quality of provision in mathematics and numeracy is good.

The school gives a high priority to the development of the provision for mathematics and numeracy within the School Development Plan (SDP), with a clear focus on developing the learning experiences provided for the children, and on improving the standards they achieve.

The numeracy coordinator provides very good leadership and support to her colleagues and oversees the systematic monitoring and evaluation of the provision, and the effective use of performance data to prioritise areas for development. The provision has been extended recently to include a 'maths trail'. This work contributes well to the current focus on processes in mathematics which is an area for improvement identified on the numeracy action plan.

The school has worked with the Southern Education Library Board to ensure that the comprehensive whole-school programme clearly outlines the progression for each area of the mathematics curriculum and provides appropriate guidance for the class teachers to create their medium and short-term planning.

The teachers make good use of a wide range of resources, including ICT, and set the learning in meaningful contexts which are based on the children's experiences and interests. They make effective use of routines, everyday situations and incidental opportunities to promote using mathematics.

The children in the FS develop early mathematical language, concepts and understanding through a range of well-resourced and well-planned play-based activities. Throughout KS1 and 2 the children engage enthusiastically with practical problem-solving tasks and investigative activities based on real-life situations and across other areas of the curriculum.

During the inspection, the children were observed using a range of interactive games, data handling software, websites and programmable devices to support their learning in numeracy. They demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of important mathematical ideas and concepts, flexibility in their thinking and were able to apply their learning in everyday contexts.

The children in the IMU are developing appropriate mathematical language in Irish.

Throughout the school, the children respond positively to learning mathematics and by the end of KS2 most of the children achieve standards that are in line with their abilities.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The teachers' planning is coherent and detailed throughout the school. The teachers work hard to plan for a wide range of activities supported by good quality resources to engage the children in the learning. The planning and subsequent evaluations do not always focus sufficiently on the learning and the expected outcomes for the children, with an over-emphasis on the completion of tasks.

3.2 TEACHING

During the inspection, the quality of the teaching ranged from satisfactory to outstanding; most of the teaching in the lessons observed was good or better. The teachers deploy a range of strategies and make effective use of ICT to support the children's learning. They provide the children with meaningful opportunities to work in pairs and groups and to share their learning with others.

In a minority of the lessons observed, there was insufficient challenge in the activities which were not well enough matched to the children's abilities.

The classroom assistants provide very good support to the children in all of the classes.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The school makes very good use of a range of qualitative and quantitative data to monitor the progress and attainments of the children and to identify those who are underachieving or require additional support with aspects of their learning. In the best practice, this information informs teaching and learning, and there is evidence that this is having a positive impact on the children's attainments.

The teachers mark the children's work regularly and, in the best practice, provide written comments which enable the children to reflect and improve on their work.

3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The overall quality of the provision to support children who require additional support with aspects of their learning is very good. The special educational needs co-ordinator provides very effective leadership and guidance to the staff and parents, and works closely with external support services.

There is a well-planned programme for whole-school training to support the staff in meeting the needs of the children with special educational needs (SEN) in their classes, and the school provides withdrawal sessions for literacy and numeracy. The classroom assistants make a valuable contribution to the children's learning in class and through their active involvement in the Reading Partnership programme.

Almost all of the children on the SEN register are making progress commensurate with their ability.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is very good.

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The Principal, who has been in post for eight years, is highly committed to the school and provides realistic direction for its development and improvement. He has overseen the development and ongoing refinement of agreed and systematic procedures for self-evaluation, including the analysis of data, to set priorities for whole-school improvement. The Vice-principal and co-ordinators carry out their roles and responsibilities to a high standard and the strong sense of collegiality throughout the school ensures a coherent and collaborative approach to school improvement.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The school gives good attention to, and meets the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005. The plan sets out clearly the agreed areas for improvement and progress in meeting the targets is monitored closely.

4.3 ACCOMMODATION

The school provides an attractive and inclusive learning environment. Very effective use is made of the well-kept outdoor areas to enhance and extend the children's learning experiences.

4.4 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The governors are highly committed to the school and carry out their associated challenge function very well. They provide valuable support to the Principal and teachers in the school development planning process, including the financial management of the provision, and in raising further the standards achieved by the children.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the very good pastoral provision as evidenced by the supportive, inclusive ethos and the commitment of the staff to the children's care and well-being;
- the very good provision for those children who require additional support with aspects of their learning;
- the highly motivated children who engage enthusiastically with their learning, particularly during practical activities.
- the good or better quality of the teaching in most of the lessons observed and the effective use of ICT to support learning and teaching;
- the very good quality of leadership and management; and
- the coherent and collaborative approach to school improvement which is underpinned by effective procedures for self-evaluation.

5.2 The area for improvement is the need to:

- improve the standards achieved by the children in English and mathematics

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

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- There is no security system on the back entrance.

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