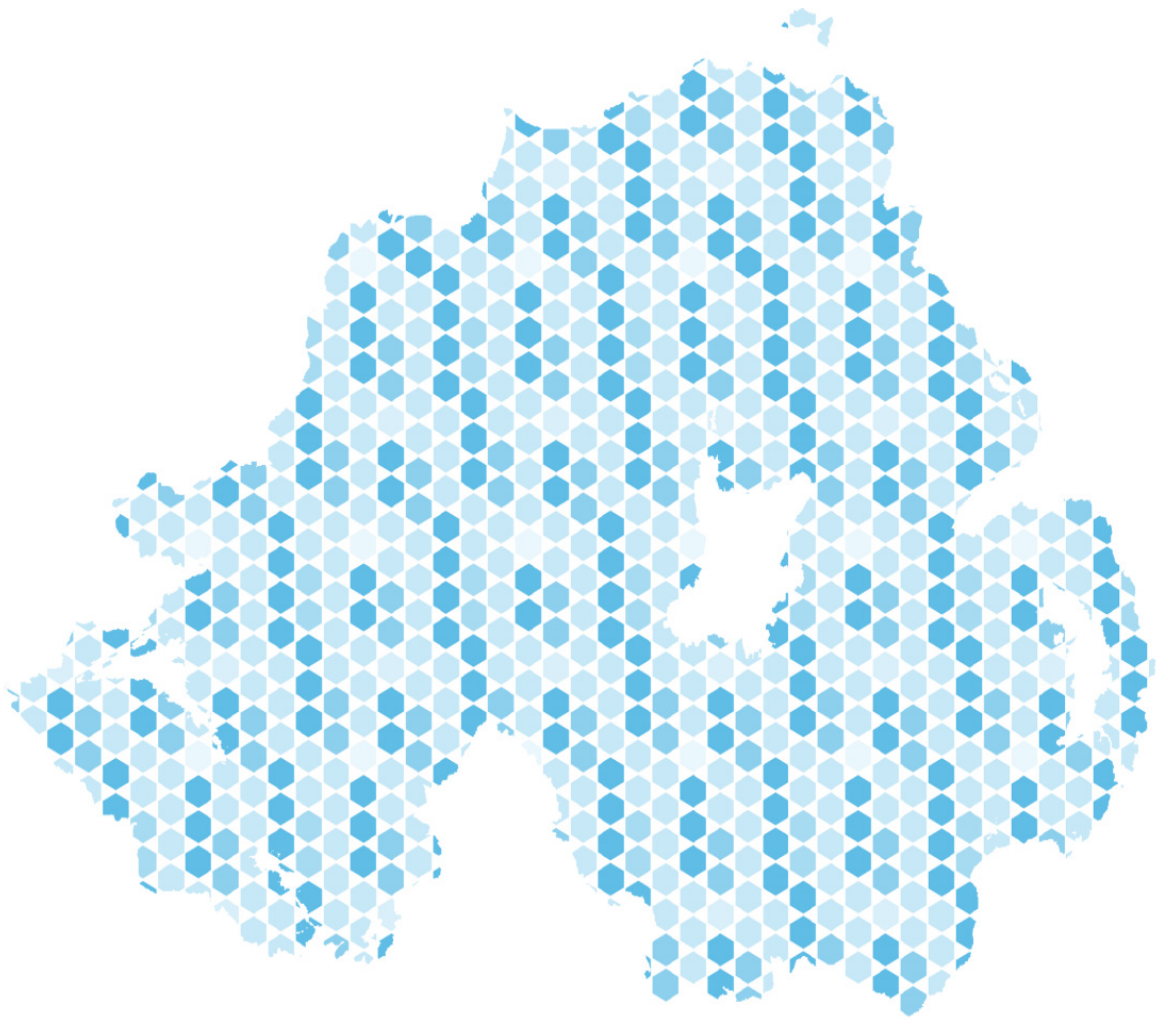


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Patrick's Primary School
and Nursery Unit, Loughguile,
Ballymena

Report of an Inspection
in January 2012



Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



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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 Patrick's Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 23/01/12**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 303-6154** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Year 1 Intake	27	21	24	27	22
Enrolments					
Primary	168	169	169	165	160
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	26	26	26	26	26
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 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): 96.2% **NI Avg Att: 94.7%**
- Average Attendance for those children on the Special Educational Needs Register: 93.4%
- | | Primary & Reception | Nursery Unit | Special Unit | Irish Medium Unit |
|--|---------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
|--|---------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
- D. i. Number of Teachers (including the principal and part-time teachers): 8 1 1 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 20 NI PTR: 20.2
- iii. Average Class Size: 23.5
- iv. Class Size (Range): 19 to 28
- v. Ancillary Support:
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- | | |
|---|-------|
| i. Clerical support: | 25 |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support: | 20 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 56.75 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 1.25%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 18%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 19.4%
- 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 | Mathematics | Irish |
| 85% | 77% | N/A |

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Patrick's Primary School and Nursery Unit is situated on the outskirts of the village of Loughguile in County Antrim. The children come from the village and the surrounding rural area. The enrolment has decreased slightly over the past four years and currently stands at 186, including 26 children in the nursery unit.

Almost 20% of the children are entitled to free school meals and 18% have been identified as needing additional support for aspects of their learning, including a very small number who have statements of special educational need.

The nursery unit is situated adjacent to school and offers 26 full-time places; currently, all of the children are in their final pre-school year.

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, the teachers and the support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and a group of the children from year 6.

Of the 109 questionnaires issued to the parents, 43 (39%) were returned to Inspection Services Branch, including 18 which contained additional written comments. Almost all of the questionnaires expressed very high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In their written comments the parents highlighted the welcoming ethos of the school, the helpful and supportive teachers and the effective communications between home and school. All of the teachers and most of the support staff responded to the online questionnaires with a small number supplying additional comments; all of the responses indicated very high levels of support for the work of the school.

In the nursery unit, 50% of the parents responded to the questionnaires and seven included additional written comments. The responses indicated that the parents regard the nursery unit highly. They valued the work of the caring and dedicated staff and the provision of very good learning opportunities that develop the children's personal and social skills.

The governors expressed strong support for the work of the school and the nursery unit. In particular, they praised the contribution and commitment of the Principal, the teachers and the support staff to developing the work of the school in the best interests of all the children.

In discussions held with the year 6 children, they talked enthusiastically about the many aspects of school life they enjoy, including the wide range of after-school activities. They indicated strongly that they feel safe and happy in school and know what to do if they have any worries about their care and well-being.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) has reported to, and discussed with the Principal and the governors the main messages emerging from the questionnaires and discussions, including a small number of the issues that were raised; where appropriate, these are dealt with in the body of the report.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in both the school and the nursery unit is outstanding. The strengths of the pastoral provision include: the very caring and supportive community ethos which promotes well the children's confidence and self-esteem; the exemplary behaviour of the children and the maturity with which they engage with adults and visitors; the very good working relationships at all levels; and the attention given to celebrating the children's efforts and achievements which are displayed extensively throughout the school.

Through their work in Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) and other curricular areas, the children develop a strong sense of place and a respect for their local environment and culture. They benefit from the very well-planned opportunities to build relationships with those from different backgrounds and traditions. This work promotes very effectively the children's cultural awareness and respect for diversity, and is valued by the governors and the parents.

The children are consulted on a range of school issues and they contribute meaningfully to decisions about aspects of school life that directly affect them through the active and effective school council and the eco-council; their opinions and ideas are valued and acted on.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school and the nursery have very good and comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department.

1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school and the nursery unit give very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. The staff develops well the children's understanding of healthy lifestyles through the promotion of healthy snacks, breaks and lunches; the very good opportunities for indoor and outdoor physical activities, and the inclusion of health and wellbeing topics through the curriculum.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The school and nursery unit have developed and maintained good links with the parents and the local and wider community. The parents are kept well informed about the work of the school through monthly newsletters, curriculum information meetings, the school website

and a texting service. In some classes, the teachers provide the parents with useful information about the curriculum and how they might support their children's learning. There is a very active parent and teacher association that supports well the work of the school with fund raising activities and events to celebrate the children's achievements.

The school's links with the wider community is significant strength, especially the very good partnership work that it is developing with other schools under the community relations, equality and diversity programme (CRED) and the Dissolving Boundaries Project. There are well developed links between the nursery unit and the local primary schools that support the smooth transition of the children to year one.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

In all classes, the children are highly motivated to learn and settle quickly to their work. In the nursery unit, the wide range of activities and the very good learning experiences available in the indoor and outdoor environments contribute to the children's purposeful and productive play. There is evidence that all the children in the nursery unit are making good progress, particularly in their development of early language and communication skills and their understanding of early mathematical and scientific concepts. Throughout the foundation stage (FS), the children learn through a combination of formal and play-based activities. As they progress through key stage (KS) 1 and KS2, they develop their personal, social and learning skills; they work well in pairs and small groups and contribute willingly to class discussions, expressing their own ideas confidently. They show respect for the opinions of others and respond well to challenging activities.

An analysis of the KS2 assessment data over the past four years shows that the school's performance in English has fluctuated around the Northern Ireland (NI) average; in mathematics it has decreased from just above, to slightly below the NI average. Compared with schools in the same free school meals category over the same period, the children's levels of attainment in English and maths are in line with the average.

The school data indicates that the children with special educational needs make good progress commensurate with their ability.

By the end of KS2 most of the children achieve very good standards in the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) ICT accreditation scheme.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The overall provision for English and literacy is very good.

The literacy co-ordinator provides thoughtful leadership to the development of literacy throughout the school and is a very effective model of good practice. She has led the staff in developing clear policies for the teaching of reading and for the development of talking and listening. She has provided staff development in these areas and systematically monitors and evaluates the provision of literacy in the school. The co-ordinator has used the school's internal data to identify underachievement and with the staff has put in place a range of strategies to improve standards. She has identified the need to focus these strategies more closely on meeting the needs of all the children.

Across the key stages much emphasis is placed on developing the children's talking and listening skills and as a result almost all of the children display very good oral communication. The teachers use effective questioning to extend the children's responses and to seek their views and opinions on a wide range of topics; the children are given appropriate thinking time, and their suggestions are valued.

The staff has worked hard to develop reading across the school. The children are taught to read systematically through the use of commercial reading schemes which are enhanced by a wide range of appropriate support materials such as novels, 'big books' and reference materials. They enjoy reading and are developing a good range of appropriate strategies to help them interpret unfamiliar text. During the inspection, groups of children read with fluency and understanding. They spoke enthusiastically about their favourite books and authors. Reading is promoted positively in the school through book fairs and through several reading support programmes and initiatives, for example, 'Reading Partners', the after school reading club and the 'Accelerated Reading' programme. The staff has created a literacy rich environment throughout the school and very good use is made of the attractive class libraries which provide books that match the interests and abilities of the children. By the end of KS2 the majority of the children are reading at a level commensurate with or above their ability.

In the FS the teachers support the children well to develop letter formation, to write words and to express ideas in simple sentences. During play-based learning, the children have good opportunities to mark-make and experiment with writing. In KS1 and KS2 the children develop increasing fluency in their writing. The children have good opportunities to write for a range of purposes and audiences and to plan and edit their work. The school has identified appropriately the need to develop further the teaching of writing through the provision of opportunities for extended, independent and creative writing, in a range of genres, throughout all the key stages.

Information and communication technology including interactive whiteboards are used successfully by the staff and the children to enhance all aspects of the literacy provision. Very good use is made of the video conferencing and other interactive applications to enable the children to communicate with children from other schools and develop their talking, listening and planning skills.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The quality of provision in mathematics and numeracy is good.

The recently appointed numeracy co-ordinator is highly committed to the ongoing development of the provision for numeracy and mathematics. She is a very effective role model for the teaching of mathematics and she has been pro-active in supporting her colleagues to address the agreed priorities for the development of mathematics and numeracy throughout the school. The school's programme for mathematics is suitably broad. The teachers plan together to ensure that there is appropriate coherence and progression in most areas of the mathematics curriculum and the co-ordinator has identified rightly, the need to review and develop this work further. There is a range of effective systems in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of the provision for mathematics and numeracy across the school; these include reviewing the teachers' planning, scrutinising the quality of work in the children's books, class visits and the analysis of assessment data.

In most classes, the mathematics lessons incorporated well-planned mental mathematics activities which were linked closely to the focus of the lesson, and the teachers used an appropriate range of teaching approaches, practical activities and discussion sessions. In the most effective practice, the teachers provided appropriately challenging and well-paced

learning activities to meet the range of abilities within the class; as a result the children responded well, sharing their ideas, recording their findings and discussing their mathematical thinking. This good practice needs to be applied more consistently across the school.

In the FS the children have a good understanding of basic number operations. They use mathematical language very effectively as a result of the imaginative activities and rich play-based contexts provided by the teachers. In KS1 the children engage well in practical activities and use a range of materials and everyday objects to develop their investigative and problem solving skills. By the end of KS1 the children use mental strategies to perform basic calculations, they can represent and interpret information and demonstrate a good understanding of measures and common shapes. In KS2 the children respond well to group work and investigative activities and they can pose their own mathematical problems. The teachers set the learning in meaningful contexts and make effective use of the outdoor environment to support the children's understanding of mathematical concepts such as shape and space. The children need to be given greater opportunities to write about their mathematics, and to and explain their mathematical thinking particularly in response to problem-solving and investigative activities. By the end of KS2 the children talked enthusiastically about their mathematics experiences; the highest attaining children demonstrated a good understanding of number facts and other key concepts but were less secure in the application of number. The majority of children make good progress in mathematics in line with their ability. The co-ordinator has identified, through the analysis of assessment information, the need to raise further the standards attained by a significant minority of the children.

The teachers use ICT effectively to support the children's mathematical understanding and to promote numeracy across the curriculum; in KS1 the children use ICT confidently and competently to research, interpret and record the daily weather data.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The teachers plan diligently and thoroughly across all areas of the curriculum. The medium term plans are focused on well-defined learning intentions. In the best practice, the teachers complete informative written evaluations of the extent to which the learning intentions were met in order to inform subsequent actions for individual children and groups. This good work needs to be disseminated more consistently throughout the school.

3.2 TEACHING

The quality of the teaching is a strength of the provision. The lessons observed during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to outstanding; with the majority being very good or better. In the most effective practice, the teachers used a range of creative approaches to provide well-paced and challenging activities for the children. The teachers used learning intentions well to focus the lesson and to reinforce and review the extent of the children's learning. In addition, the teachers had high expectations of what the children could achieve and they used questions skilfully to develop the children's thinking and to engage them in extended dialogue. The withdrawal sessions for the children who have been identified as requiring additional support with their learning were very well planned by the learning support teacher in collaboration with the class teachers; in the sessions observed, the children were motivated and engaged in a range of challenging activities.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The school has made good progress in developing the whole-school assessment processes. A wide range of assessment data is analysed to obtain information about individual children's levels of attainment, to identify key areas for the development of literacy and numeracy, and to set class and whole school targets. The teachers now need to use the information gathered to plan tasks and activities that meet more effectively the needs of the individuals and groups of children who have been identified as underachieving.

The teachers provide very good oral feedback in class and they undertake the marking of the children's work conscientiously, often adding positive and constructive comments to encourage the children. In order to develop the quality of the marking further, the teachers need to ensure that their feedback consistently advises the children on ways to improve their work, and that the children have opportunities to respond to this advice.

The parents receive regular information on their child's progress and attainment through written reports and formal parent teacher consultations. The annual written reports provide parents with a detailed and comprehensive evaluation of their children's progress.

3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The children who require additional support with literacy and numeracy are identified early through teacher observation and the careful analysis of a range of standardised tests. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) manages effectively the provision and liaises well with the class teachers, the learning support teachers and outside agencies. The class teachers take responsibility for writing and implementing the individual education plans (IEP'S) and record evidence of the children's progress in meeting their targets. The teachers need to develop the IEP format to state more precisely the specific strategies necessary to support learners and ensure those strategies are implemented to meet the needs of individual children.

Additional support is provided by withdrawal sessions taken by a part time learning support teacher and these are effective in raising the children's levels of attainment. The SENCO needs to consider how to deploy the learning support teacher in a more flexible way to better meet the needs of all of the children. The classroom assistants have been trained in the reading partnership programme and the data indicates the reading ages of participating children have significantly improved. The classroom assistants provide very good sensitive support for the children and collaborate well with the teachers.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 The quality of leadership and management is good.

The Principal has been in post from September 2011. She has a clear and shared vision for the development of the school and gives a high priority to the children's pastoral care and on developing a collegial and supportive ethos within the school. She has promoted a culture of self-evaluation through the systematic approach to the review of policies, procedures and practices and she is highly supportive of, and involved in the work of the nursery unit. The role of the co-ordinators has been well-defined and they provide effective leadership and guidance to the staff.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

A culture of self-evaluation is developing well throughout the school and the nursery unit. The School Development Plan (SDP) meets fully, the requirements of the School Development Plan Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005. It sets out a wide range of priorities for improvement for the medium and longer term which are based appropriately on the outcomes of a variety of self-evaluation processes with the staff and the wider school community.

4.3 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The governors are well-informed about the work of the school and make a positive contribution to the life and work of the school. They support effectively the Principal and the staff in the implementation of the SDP.

4.4 ACCOMMODATION

All staff work hard to provide an appealing and child-friendly environment to support learning both inside the school and in the school grounds. The children's work and achievements are celebrated through attractive displays in the classrooms and shared areas. The quality of caretaking is very good, and the school and surrounding grounds are very well maintained.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the exemplary behaviour of the children and their positive disposition to learning;
- the outstanding quality of the provision for pastoral care characterised by the caring family and community ethos, based on mutual respect at all levels;
- the very good quality of the provision in the nursery unit and the close curricular links with the FS;
- the hard-working and dedicated staff and the quality of teaching, which in the majority of the lessons observed was very good or better;
- the creative use of ICT to enhance the children's learning experiences across the curriculum; and
- the commitment and enthusiasm of the newly appointed principal who demonstrates a clear vision for the future development of the school .

5.2 The area for improvement includes the need to:

- plan and implement more effectively, a range of appropriate and targeted strategies to raise further the standards attained by the children in literacy and numeracy.

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

6. THE NURSERY UNIT

6.1 The main strengths within the nursery's educational and pastoral provision are as follows:

- the nurturing ethos in the nursery which is based on very good working relationships at all levels and the very good use made of all available space to create inviting play areas which develop the children's curiosity and contribute to their purposeful and productive play;
- the quality of the interaction between the staff and the children is consistently of a very good standard and, on occasions, outstanding;
- the carefully planned programme which is broad and balanced and provides very good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- the well-organised daily timetable which helps to develop effectively the children's thinking skills and levels of independence through the provision of lengthy periods of uninterrupted play;
- the effective observation and assessment methods which appropriately inform planning; and
- the teacher-in-charge of the nursery who demonstrates very good leadership and fosters a reflective approach to the work of the dedicated staff team.

6.2 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this nursery is very good. The nursery is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the learners; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

No follow-up inspection of the nursery is required.

**STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON ST PATRICK'S PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY UNIT,
LOUGHGUILLE, BALLYMENA**

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	26	0
Attending part-time	0	0
Under 3 years of age*	0	0
With statement of SEN**	0	0
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	0	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4***	0	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2***	0	0
With English as an additional language	0	0

* On 1 July.

** Special Educational Needs.

*** The stages refer to those set out in the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	0
Average attendance for the previous year.	90.3%

2. Duration of Sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
4½ hours	-	-

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	1	0
Nursery Assistants (qualified)	1	0
Nursery Assistants (non-qualified)	0	0

Number of: ****	
Students	1
Trainees	0

**** Total placements since September of current year

4. Parental Questionnaires (to be completed by Inspection Services Branch)

Number issued	26
Percentage returned	50%
Number of written comments	7

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