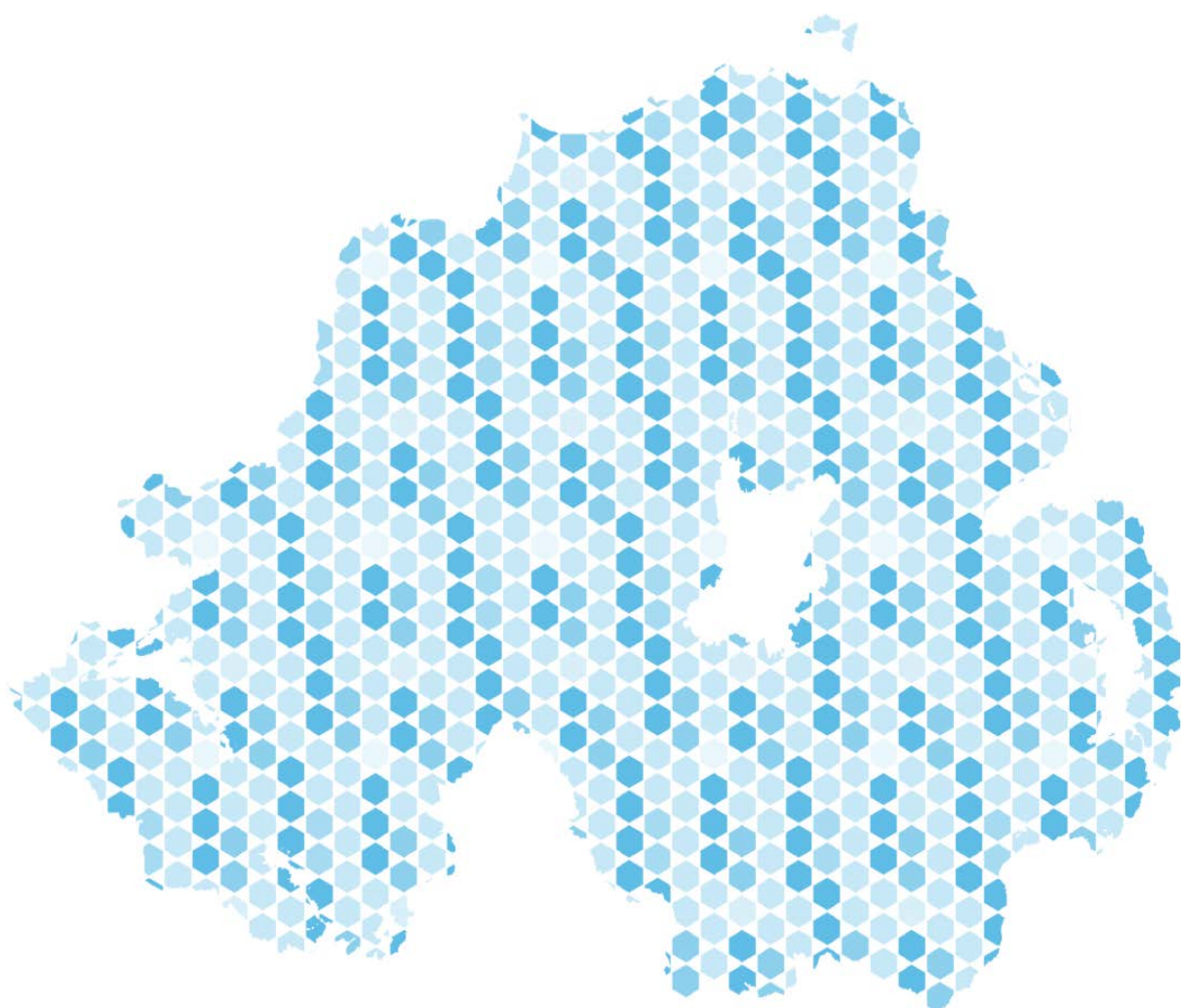


PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Kilcoan Primary School,
Islandmagee, Co Antrim

Report of an Inspection in
February 2015



*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*

Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



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%

Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels in reports:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

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1. Inspection method and evidence base

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of primary schools, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self-evaluation* at: <http://www.eti.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-primary.htm>.

Inspectors observed teaching and learning, scrutinised documentation and the children's written work and held formal and informal discussions with children, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with a representative from the governors;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Ten percent of the parents and 67% of the teaching and non-teaching staff responded to the questionnaires. The responses to the parental questionnaires indicated high levels of satisfaction with, and support for, the life and work of the school. The responses from the teaching and support staff were also highly positive. In their responses they expressed their appreciation of the teamwork and the family ethos within the school community. The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) has reported to the principal and a representative of the board of governors the main findings from the questionnaires.

2. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

1. the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy, in particular, how the school is addressing low attainment and underachievement, where applicable;
2. the quality of provision in the school; and
3. the quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

Kilcoan Primary School has recently celebrated its 175th Anniversary. It is situated in the grounds of First Islandmagee Presbyterian Church and is the only Presbyterian Maintained School in Northern Ireland. The children come mainly from the hamlet of Mullaghboy and the surrounding rural area. Enrolment has remained steady over the last four years, with small numbers of newcomer children enrolling at the school. The acting principal held this post on a temporary basis from February 2013 and was officially appointed in March 2014, following a period of significant change in the school's staffing.

Kilcoan Primary School	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	43	39	40	44
% Attendance	97.28%	96.72%	97.46%	-
% Attendance for those children on the SEN Register	95.9%	92.9%	97.2%	-
Percentage of pupils entitled to Free School Meals	13%	10%	11%	16%
% of children on SEN register	26%	23%	26%	37%
No. of children with statements of educational needs	*	*	-	-
No. of newcomers	*	*	*	*

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall Performance Level	Satisfactory
Achievements and Standards	Satisfactory
Provision	Satisfactory
Leadership and Management	Inadequate

5. Achievements and standards

- Most of the children are developing positive attitudes and dispositions to their learning. When given the opportunity, they work well together in paired or small group activities and engage readily in research and investigations. In the best practice, in just over one-half of the lessons observed, the children access resources independently, solve problems and make decisions about their own learning. They are most focused and engaged when the work is well matched to their individual needs and abilities. This practice needs to be disseminated further to provide more consistent opportunities for the children to develop their self-management skills and independence as learners.
- The school's performance data shows that the majority of children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make good progress in mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation. In English, a majority of children do not attain the expected standards. An analysis of the school's performance data suggests that around one-quarter of the children do not make consistent year-on-year progress.
- Most of the children enjoy talking about their work. The children in year 7 speak enthusiastically about their favourite books and authors and read with a good level of fluency and understanding. The younger children talk readily to each other and to the teacher about their ideas during the play-based learning sessions. These oral skills are not developed consistently across all of the year groups. The younger children practise confidently their independent writing while taking part in activity-based learning and, by year 7, most of the children write competently for a range of purposes and audiences. However, across the classes the quality of the children's written communication is too variable. The children's spelling, punctuation and grammar need to be more consistent if their writing is to become increasingly accurate and varied.

- The children are generally secure in their basic computation skills and can make accurate calculations to complete their regular class work. The school has identified that the children are less secure in data handling, shape and measure; the inspection evidence endorses this finding. While, in the best practice, the children can express their thinking and learning, the quality of the children's written work and the opportunities for them to demonstrate and use their mathematical knowledge is variable across the school.
- The children who require additional support in their learning develop social, inter-personal skills which enable them to interact effectively with their peers and adults. They make progress in English and mathematics in line with their ability.
- The children enjoy working with, and attain good standards in, information and communication technology (ICT).

6. Provision

- The classes are all composite in nature, comprising two or more year groups. In the best practice, the teachers manage effectively the considerable demands in terms of classroom organisation and planning to meet the children's differing needs. The teachers' evaluations of the learning are rigorous and inform future planning to meet the needs of all of the children through suitably differentiated activities. In a minority of lessons, where differentiation is less sharply focused, the teachers need to amend their planning for the discrete year groups and take greater cognisance of the range of abilities across the whole class to ensure that the work is appropriately challenging.
- The teaching observed in just over one-half of the lessons was good or better. In these lessons the teachers build on the children's previous learning, make the intended learning clear and provide appropriate levels of support or challenge. In the less effective practice, the teachers' expectations of the children are too low; the slow pace of the lesson and the narrow range of teaching strategies lead to the children becoming disengaged. All of the teachers mark the children's work regularly and positively. However, there is a variation in the quality of the marking to promote improvement. It will be important for all of the teachers to indicate more clearly to the children how to improve their work and give them opportunities to make the required improvements and corrections.
- The school's programme for language and literacy has recently been updated and is currently under review. There is a particular and appropriate focus on extending the children's opportunities to write independently for different purposes and audiences. Significant strengths in the updated planning include: the provision of reading materials well matched to the interests and abilities of the children; and, the connection between the children's work in literacy, especially through the class novels, and in other areas of the curriculum. The children in the foundation stage have well-planned opportunities to talk and listen to one another, notably in play-based learning. In the best practice, the teachers' effective questioning and prompts enable the children in key stage (KS) 1 and KS 2 to develop their thinking skills and make extended oral responses. The co-ordinator has effectively prioritised the sharing of, and building on, this good practice in order to improve further the quality of the children's oral communication.

- The co-ordinator has led the development of useful overview planners of the whole-school mathematics curriculum, with a view to connecting the children's learning to real contexts and guiding the staff in the progression and breadth of mathematics to be taught. In the best practice, the teachers tailor this information to guide their classroom practice and meet the specific needs of the children in their class. The most effective mathematics lessons are well structured, build on the children's prior learning and are suitably challenging. In these lessons, the children use practical equipment to consolidate their learning, solve problems, undertake investigations and use mathematical language to articulate their thinking. The co-ordinator has appropriately identified the need for further dissemination of the most effective practice, and careful monitoring and evaluation, to ensure that it is implemented more consistently across the school.
- The quality of pastoral care provided by the school is good. The school has a welcoming, supportive ethos in which the children appear happy and secure. Key features of the current arrangements include the strong sense of teamwork throughout the school community, the children's good behaviour and the extra-curricular experiences which enhance further their personal development. During discussions with a group of children from years 6 and 7, they reported that they particularly enjoy meeting their friends in school, understand the reward system, feel safe and know who to talk to if they have any concerns.
- The school identifies at an early stage those children who have difficulty with aspects of their learning. The children benefit from well-targeted support for literacy, numeracy and personal and social development through in-class support, withdrawal sessions and contact with relevant external agencies. The individual education plans have been reviewed and updated, to include practical guidance and information about the children's strengths and their specific needs. The short-term targets in the individual education plans require further refinement in order to measure systematically the children's progress and inform the next stage of the teachers' planning.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity thereby encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles through, for example, the provision for play at break and lunch-time, the range of sporting activities available to the children and the healthy breaks initiative. While play areas in the school grounds are limited and unsuitable for team games, the teachers make good use of the facilities and space available. The children benefit from regular additional physical activities such as swimming.

7. Leadership and management

- At the time of the inspection, the leadership and management structures had been in place for a short time. A new chairperson of the board of governors had just taken up post, the board of governors had been re-constituted and the acting principal had been in post for less than a year. All of the teaching staff hold multiple roles of responsibility.

- The leadership has fostered successfully a team ethos among the staff and enjoys the support of the parents. The co-ordinators have provided effective leadership in aspects of their respective areas of responsibility, and now need to monitor and evaluate learning and teaching more systematically in order to focus more closely on raising the standards attained by the children in English and mathematics. The leadership team lacks a sufficiently coherent, shared understanding of what constitutes high-quality learning and teaching, a clearly articulated vision for the school's development and a strategic plan to effect school improvement.
- The school development planning process is at a very early stage; consequently, the school has not established a systematic approach to the process of self-evaluation leading to improvement. The staff team has begun to analyse and use data to identify underachievement and is extending this process. The targets in the current action plans are appropriate, but need to be focused more sharply on improving the quality of learning and teaching and be more closely linked to measurable outcomes. The arrangements for consultation with the children, the parents, the teachers and the governors are limited. The school development plan should be adjusted in the light of the inspection findings and through more extensive consultation with all stakeholders.
- The children's learning experiences are enriched through sporting links with other small schools and a local post-primary school, and a shared residential for the children in years 6 and 7 with Mullaghduh Primary School. Visiting speakers and trips to places of interest, including such local sites as the beach, enhance the programme for connected learning. Very good links have been established with the parents; the Parent Teacher Association provides financial support to help meet curricular needs, and practical help with performances and social events. The parents are kept well informed through practical sessions in school and written guidance on how they can support their children's progress.
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors' contribution to the life and work of the school may be enhanced through reviewing a wider range of first-hand evidence from the various post-holders of the impact of the actions to improve the standards attained by the children
- 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 following areas need to be addressed: to ensure that records of training, policy review and risk assessment are up to date, information is tailored with contact details specific to the school, and that all staff and new governors are fully aware of the updated policies and procedures.
- It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school's provision and school budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the children and the staff.

8. Conclusion

In most of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided in this school is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards, learning and teaching, leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-24 month period.

The main areas for improvement are the need:

- for the leadership and management to develop a more systematic approach to self-evaluation and planning for improvement in which targets are more sharply focused on improving the quality of learning and teaching and more closely linked to measurable outcomes; and
- for the teachers to develop further the current systems for monitoring and evaluating, including the use of performance data, to track the children's progress and inform planning, in order to ensure that all of the children attain standards in line with their ability.

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