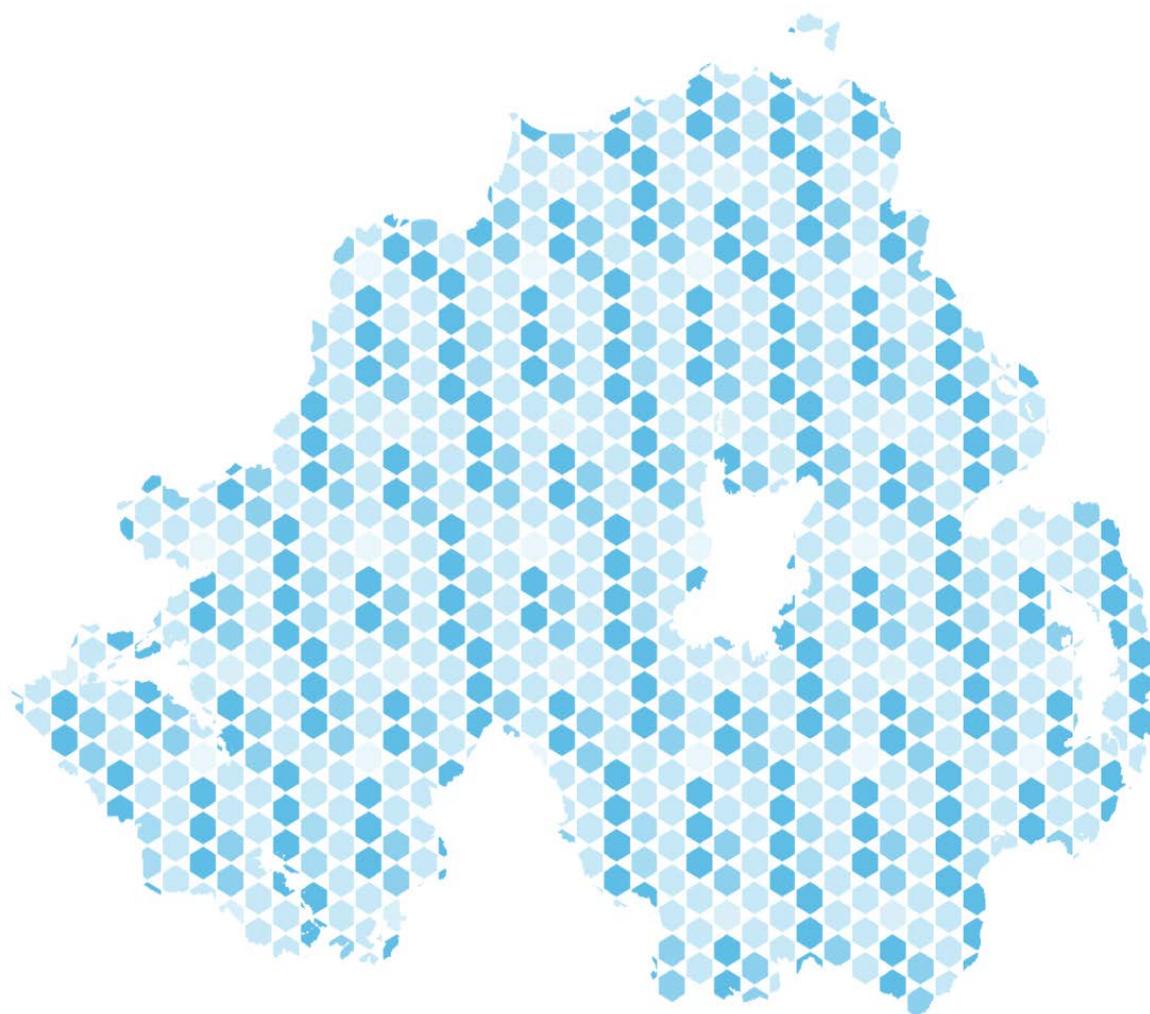


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Maralin Village Primary School
and Nursery Unit, Magheralin,
Co Armagh

Report of an Inspection in
March 2014

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

Questionnaire	Number issued (total number in the school per category)	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	201	32	16%	21
Teaching staff	13	10	77%	*
Support staff	11	9	82%	5

* fewer than 5

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) is trialling a range of methods for collecting the views of parents about the life and work of the school. As a result, the response rate to the parental questionnaire may be low.

The responses to the parental questionnaires indicated a high level of support for the work of the school. In the written responses, the parents highlighted their children's enjoyment of school, and they expressed their appreciation of the dedicated and supportive staff and principal. The few matters raised were discussed with the principal and the governors. Most of the teachers and support staff completed the questionnaires and their responses were wholly positive. In particular, they highlighted the strong sense of collegiality within the school; a view which the inspection findings endorse. In discussions with the governors, they emphasised the commitment of the staff and the high regard for the school within the local community.

2. Context

Maralin Village Primary school is situated in the village of Magheralin, County Armagh. Almost all of the children come from the village and the surrounding rural area. The school enrolment has risen steadily over the past four years, and now stands at 275 children in the primary school, with a further 26 children in full-time places in the nursery unit. At the time of the inspection, approximately 9% of the children were entitled to free school meals, and around 11% of the children were identified by the school as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

Maralin Village Primary School	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Enrolment	219	236	248	274
% Attendance	95.9%	96%	97%	96.6%
FSME Percentage ¹	8.5%	8.1%	8.2%	9.1%
% (No) of children on SEN register	18.3%	16.6%	13.7%	11.3%
No. of children with statements of educational needs	5	*	5	5
No. of newcomers	0	0	0	0

Source: data as held by the school.

*fewer than 5

3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

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

4. Overall finding

Overall Performance Level	Very Good
Achievements and Standards	Very Good
Provision	Very Good
Leadership and Management	Very Good
Nursery Unit	Good

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are confident, highly motivated and display positive attitudes to their learning. They are evidently proud of their school and their behaviour is exemplary; they display excellent personal and social skills and show respect towards staff, visitors and their peers. The children work productively in paired and group activities, listening and responding thoughtfully to the views of others, and they show a very good ability to work independently and to manage aspects of their own learning.

¹ The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

- An analysis of the end of key stage (KS) 2 performance data² in three of the past four years shows that in English the school's performance is above the Northern Ireland (NI) average in one of the three years and in mathematics it is consistently in line with or above the average. Compared with schools in the same free school meals (FSM) category, the performance in English is consistently below the average and in mathematics it is consistently in line with or above the average: most recently, however, the performance in both English and mathematics shows a significant and improving trend. The school's internal performance data shows that almost all of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make very good progress in English and mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation.
- Throughout the school, the children demonstrate outstanding talking and listening skills and talk confidently about their learning. They enjoy reading and speak knowledgeably about an extensive range of books and authors. Across the key stages, the children are able to write in different forms, and for a variety of purposes, and plan and redraft their work to improve the quality of their writing. Almost all of the children present their work very neatly. The children enjoy their mathematics lessons and display a very good recall and understanding of key facts and concepts across the areas of mathematics. By the end of key stage (KS) 2, the most able children have a very good understanding of number and place value, and can complete a range of simple and more complex computation accurately. They explain their methods confidently, using appropriate mathematical language, and can offer alternative strategies when prompted by their teachers.
- The children in the nursery unit are friendly and almost all engage well in sustained play. Their representational work is of a good standard and shows attention to detail; a significant minority demonstrate good pre-writing skills and early number recognition. They co-operate well with the staff, can listen attentively to stories and have good levels of independence in their play.
- The children have well-planned opportunities to use an increasing range of digital media and software to develop further their learning. The school's records of achievement in information and communication technology indicate that the children are developing a wide range of skills and are achieving a very good standard.

6. Provision

- The teachers use a common format for planning which is comprehensive and indicates clearly how the learning activities will meet the needs of the range of abilities within each class. In the most effective practice, it is informed well by constructive and reflective evaluations of the children's previous learning.

² Due to the current transition period in the arrangements for statutory assessment, this analysis of the end of KS2 performance data is based on the outcomes up to but not including the 2012/13 school year.

- Almost all of the teaching observed was good or better; half was very good or outstanding. In the most effective practice, there was good progression in the learning and the activities were matched well to the range of ability of the children. The work was integrated well across the various areas of the curriculum and the teachers used skilful questioning to extend the children's thinking and understanding. In the less effective practice, the learning was overly directed by the teacher and the activities did not present an appropriate level of challenge to progress and extend the learning of all the children. The children's work is marked positively and supportively. In the best practice, written comments provide clear guidance on how the children can make further improvement and there are well-organised opportunities for the children to evaluate constructively their own work and that of their peers.
- In both the school and nursery unit, the children who require additional help with aspects of their learning are identified at an early stage through classroom observations and the analysis of performance data. The individual education plans are relevant and almost all outline appropriate targets and intervention strategies. In the best practice, the classroom teachers take account of the children's individual targets and incorporate these into lesson planning. The children's progress is tracked effectively by the special educational needs coordinator and the class teachers, and parents are kept well informed about their child's progress. The classroom assistants make a valuable contribution to supporting children with reading through the Reading Partnership programme.
- There is a systematic and thorough approach to the development of literacy skills throughout the school; the comprehensive whole-school programme ensures very good progression in the children's learning and is supported by appropriate resources. The teachers create a literacy rich learning environment, and the children have very good opportunities to integrate their literacy, particularly their writing skills, across the curriculum. The emphasis on talking and listening skills during class activities develops well the children's self esteem and confidence.
- The detailed long-term overview for mathematics guides well the learning and teaching, and ensures that there is balanced coverage across the areas of mathematics and a clear line of progression through the three key stages. The children benefit from well-planned practical activities which develop further their mathematical thinking and language, and consolidate and extend their knowledge. In the best practice, these activities are connected well to curriculum topics and real-life experience, encouraging the children to apply their mathematics and to develop problem-solving skills. In the foundation stage, the high quality of the play-based learning provides valuable opportunities to develop the children's early literacy and numeracy skills.
- The quality of provision in the nursery unit is good. The nursery unit provides an attractive learning environment; it is enhanced further by wall displays incorporating the children's own artwork. The thematic approach to the planned programme provides variety for the children throughout the year, and appropriate methods are used to gather information about the children's progress and development. More account needs to be taken of the children's individual responses when planning future learning. The interaction between the staff and the children is supportive and contributes to the happy atmosphere in the nursery unit. However, the staff need to review aspects of the organisation of the day, including the lunchtime routine, to ensure every opportunity is used effectively to develop the children's language and learning.

- The outstanding quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school and the nursery unit is characterised by the child-centred, welcoming ethos, and the highly positive working relationships. The school council and eco council provide the children with valuable opportunities to contribute effectively to the decision-making processes within the school. The wide range of extra-curricular experiences available enhances the quality of the children's overall learning experiences and contributes significantly to their personal development.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy lifestyles through curriculum topics and the emphasis given to healthy breaks and physical activity.

7. Leadership and management

- The principal has a clear, shared vision for the school focused on achieving the highest quality of learning and teaching for all of the children. The role of the curriculum co-ordinators has been an area under review and the recently formed curriculum teams are focused on appropriate areas for development and have made a significant start to implementing effective processes for monitoring the quality of provision. The school development plan (SDP) is informed appropriately by consultation with the children, parents and governors and the school's monitoring and evaluation processes, including an efficient use of performance data. Importantly, to improve further the very good provision and standards, the principal and the leadership team have identified, as key priorities, the need to disseminate the existing very good and outstanding practice, and to build the capacity of the curriculum teams to lead and develop further their areas of responsibility.
- The school has effective arrangements to keep parents informed about the life and work of the school, including, for example, a website, curriculum evening and regular newssheets providing updates on school events. The school has established very good links with a range of other schools, with people in the community and with various external agencies.
- The governors support the principal and staff well in the implementation of the school development plan (SDP) and make a positive contribution to the life and work of the school. Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the parents, staff and school community can have confidence in most aspects of governance evaluated. The governors' contribution to the life of the school would be developed further through reviewing and challenging, where necessary, a greater range of evidence presented to them regarding the effectiveness of the action being led by the various post-holders.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. In discussions with the inspectors, the year 6 children spoke enthusiastically about their enjoyment of lessons. They reported that they feel secure in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their well-being.

8. Conclusion

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

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