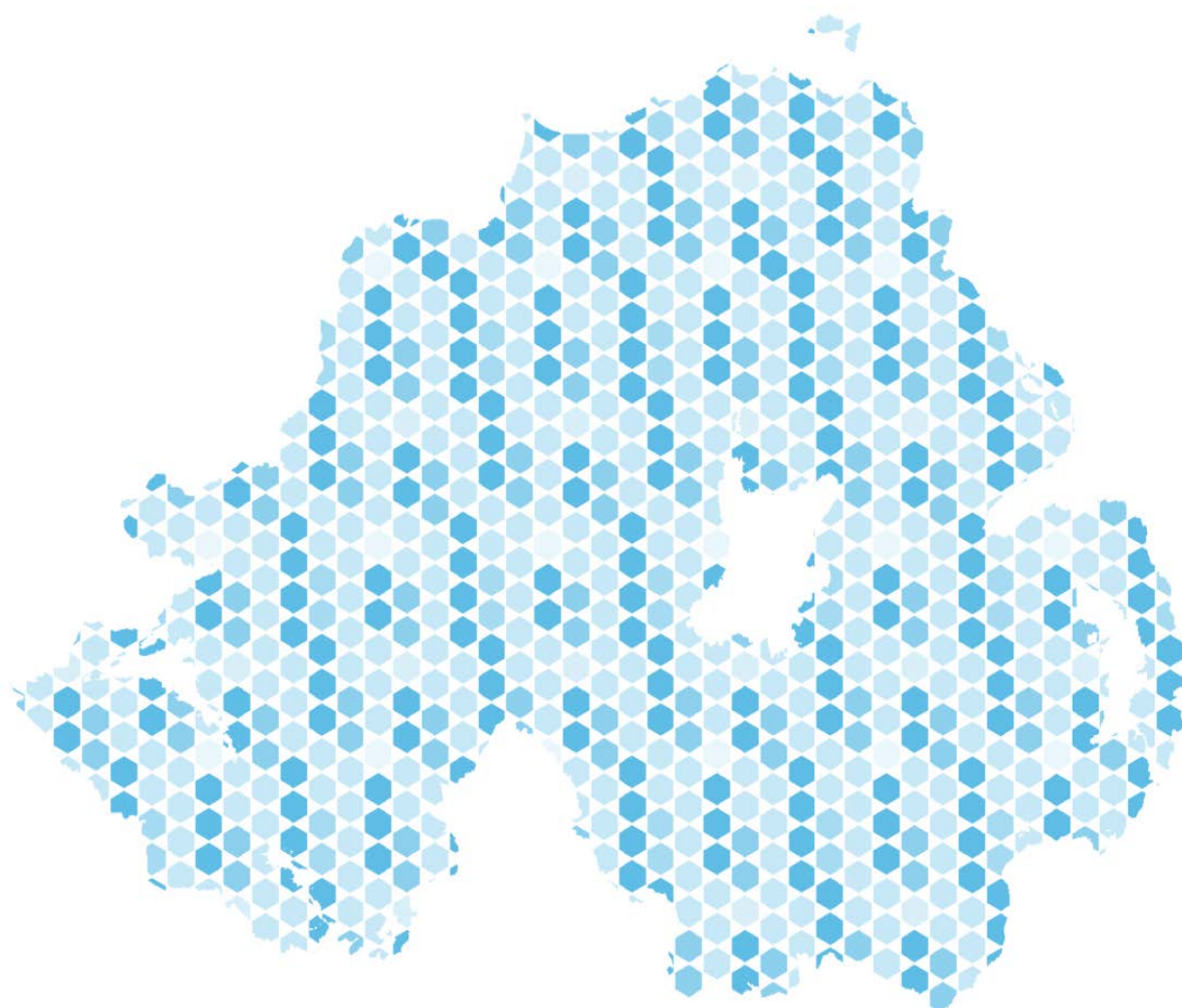


# PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Finian's Primary School,  
Newtownards, Co Down

Report of an Inspection in  
September 2014

*eti*

*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.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.

Twenty-two percent of the parents, all of the teachers and a small number of the non-teaching staff responded to the questionnaires. Almost all of the responses indicated a good level of satisfaction with the provision in the school. In particular, the parents praised the hard-working staff, the caring and supportive family ethos, the effective links in the community and the useful information they receive about their children's progress. Almost all of the teaching and non-teaching responses were generally very positive; they emphasised, and valued, the guidance and support provided for the staff by the new principal, the chair of the governors, the parents and wider community particularly during recent years. The governors expressed their appreciation for the hard work and dedication of the staff to the children and their families. ETI reported to the principal and the representative of the board of governors the main issues emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

## **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**

St Finian's Primary School is situated in Anne Street, Newtownards. The children come mainly from the town and surrounding local area. Over the past three years, the school has had to deal with a number of traumatic, pastoral matters that have had a major impact on the life and work of the school. In January 2014, a new principal was appointed and, together with the chairperson of the board of governors, have supported the staff. A new management structure has been introduced, which includes challenging roles and responsibilities for members of the teaching staff.

St Finian's Primary School	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	163	170	156	156
% Attendance (NI Average)	95.8%	95%	95.5%	91.7%
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	24%	34%	33%	30%
% (No) of children on SEN register	23%	26.5%	25%	17.3%
No. of children with statements of educational needs	5	*	*	*
No. of newcomers	10	16	15	19

**Source:** data as held by the school.

\* fewer than 5

#### 4. Overall findings of the inspection

<b>Overall Performance Level</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Achievements and Standards</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Provision</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Leadership and Management</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>

#### 5. Achievements and standards

- The children are courteous, happy and well-motivated learners; they engage readily with their peers and are respectful towards staff and visitors to the school. They settle quickly to their work and, when given the opportunity, can adopt a range of roles in group work. Their behaviour is exemplary and they show a sense of pride in their school.
- The school's performance data shows that most of the children are achieving in line with their ability, or above expectation, in English and mathematics.
- By year 7, the children read with confidence and understanding; they discuss a wide range of authors and talk enthusiastically about the texts they have read across a range of subjects. The staff have identified that children would benefit from more opportunities to read for pleasure and have plans to purchase additional resources. Although the children are beginning to develop aspects of their writing, currently, it is too narrowly focused on de-contextualised grammar exercises and there is an over emphasis on handwriting practice rather than the children expressing their ideas through personal writing.
- The highest attaining children in year 7 demonstrated their knowledge of important mathematical ideas and concepts, for example, place value, shape, space and measures. While most of the children achieve standards in numeracy in line with their ability or above expectation, they would benefit from developing further flexibility in their mathematical thinking. The numeracy co-ordinator has appropriately identified the need to develop a whole -school approach to the progression of learning across the mathematics curriculum.

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

- The children's work on display around the school celebrates their learning and shows that they have developed a range of information and communication technology (ICT) skills. In the early years, the children use well the interactive whiteboards and programmable devices to consolidate their learning of early mathematical concepts. By year 7, the children can research topics, create spreadsheets and Powerpoint presentations, represent data and can use digital cameras. The key stage (KS) 2 children would benefit from having more opportunities to compose and edit on screen.

## **6. Provision**

- The teachers have developed an appropriate whole school format for their short-term planning. It will be important that each year group ensure that there is sufficient content within the planning to guide the work of the staff. The co-ordinators have identified the need to review the long and medium-term plans to ensure progression in the children's learning and takes account of the requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum.
- In the most effective practice, the teachers are well prepared and the lessons clearly build on the children's previous learning, they use effective questioning to develop the children's thinking skills and provide them with opportunities to present their learning to the class in a meaningful context. In the less effective teaching, expectations are too low, there are missed opportunities to extend the children's language and learning and the teachers rely too heavily on low level questioning which limits the opportunities for the children to develop their responses. It will be important for the teachers to agree a shared structure and pace for all of the lessons. The support staff build the children's confidence and self-esteem in a sensitive manner.
- A small number of children benefit from the withdrawal sessions provided by peripatetic outreach support. The provision for special educational needs is currently under review with a focus on developing further an appropriate programme of withdrawal sessions. The in-class support is not sufficiently targeted to meet the needs of those children who require support with aspects of their learning.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is good; this is evidenced through the inclusive, caring and supportive ethos, the good working relationships and the well-mannered children. A whole-school reward system encourages the children to work diligently and they benefit from the opportunities to take on positions of responsibility through, for example, caring for the younger children in the playground and enhancing the school environment. The links with other schools and the local parish community are used well to develop the children's social skills and mutual understanding.
- The school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. The promotion of healthy breaks and the children's participation in a range of physical activities encourages them to adopt healthy lifestyles.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The principal has been in post for a short time; he is fully committed to the further development of the life and work of the school. Since his appointment, he has worked diligently to foster a spirit of collegiality and collaboration within the school. The core team of co-ordinators are reviewing and developing their key areas of the provision; the management team are aware of the need to develop further the monitoring and evaluating of their specialist areas in order to provide high quality learning and teaching across all areas of the curriculum.
- The school's processes for self-evaluation leading to improvement are at an early stage of development. The current school development plan (SDP) outlines important areas for improvement. The staff have made a useful start to analysing all of the available information, including assessment data, to evaluate aspects of the school's provision. In taking this good work forward, the staff need to adjust the school development plan (SDP) to ensure that there is a clear focus on learning and teaching, particularly in literacy and numeracy.
- There are appropriate arrangements in place for communicating and consulting with the parents to involve them appropriately in their children's education. The parents contribute to the learning within the classrooms through visits to share their skills and talent with the children. A very successful project involving the parents and key stage (KS) 2 children led to the designing, building and test-driving a vehicle in the electric car challenge. A very effective parent-teacher association raises significant funds to enhance further the provision for the children. The school has also established very good links with other schools, the local parish community and with a variety of external support agencies. The children support a range of charities; this is helping the children to be made aware of the needs of others less fortunate than themselves.
- 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 have identified the need to broaden their awareness of learning and teaching within the school and have created link governors to liaise with the each of the co-ordinators; the teachers welcome the governors' proposal and commitment to raising further the standards within the school. The governors report that they intend to develop further their challenge function in order to work with the staff and oversee the developmental work being undertaken.
- 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 children reported that they felt very secure in school and knew what to do if they had any concerns about their well-being.

## **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 and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively.

The areas for improvement are:

- for all the teachers to develop a shared understanding of and implement the learning and teaching approaches required to provide high quality literacy and numeracy programmes which meet the needs of all the children more effectively;
- to adopt a more rigorous approach to planning, monitoring and evaluating the learning and teaching in order to build more effectively on the children's prior learning and ensure that all lessons provide the appropriate breadth of learning and challenge.

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.



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