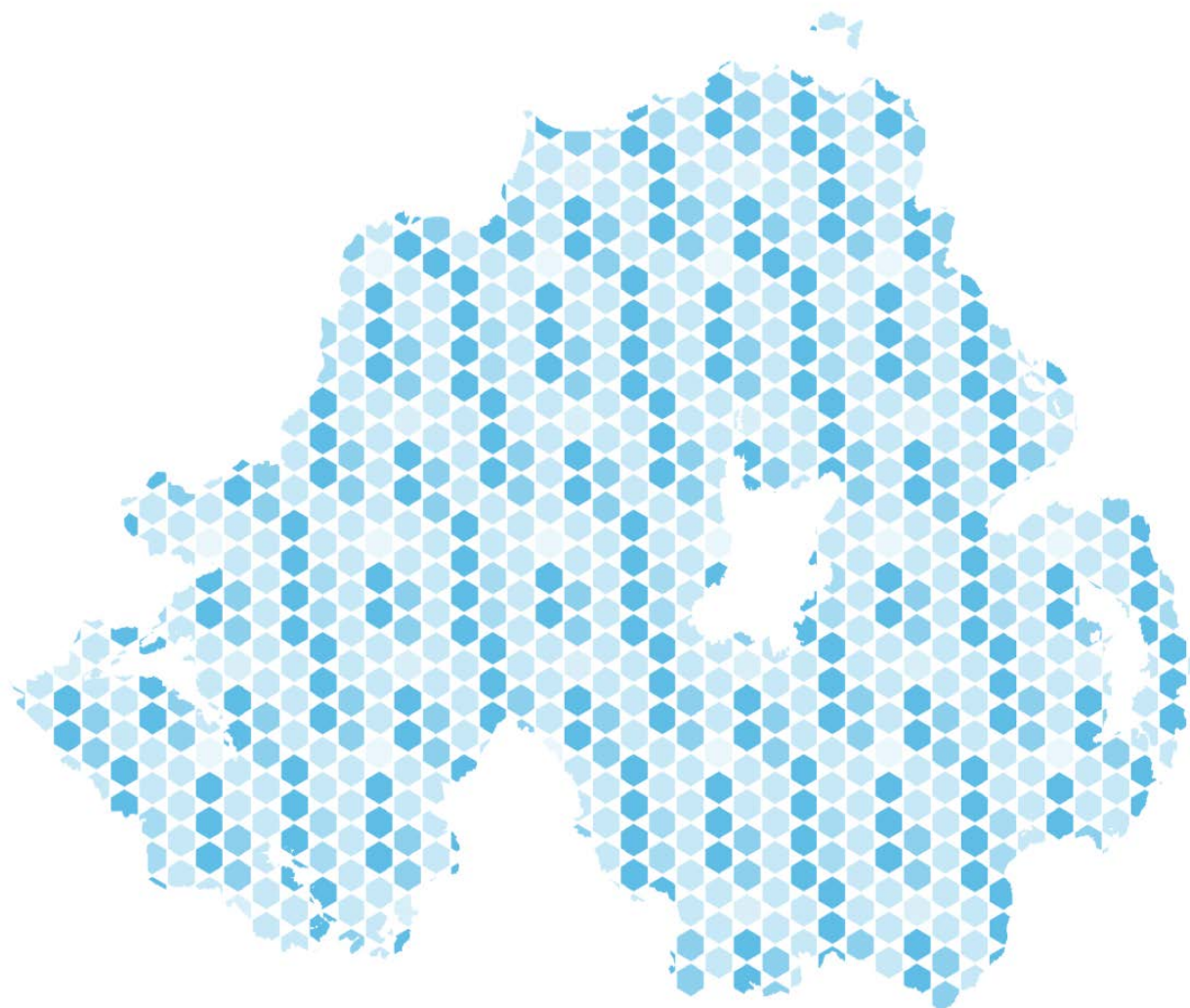


PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Malachy's Primary School
and Nursery Unit, Belfast

Report of an Inspection in
May 2015

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

Forty parents and most of the teaching and support staff responded to the questionnaire. The parental responses indicated high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, they highlighted the caring and supportive nature of the staff in supporting the personal, social and emotional needs of the children. Almost all of the staff responses were positive and they indicated their strong support for the principal. The main messages and a small number of issues arising from the questionnaires were shared with the principal and the chair of the board of governors.

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 the provision of literacy and numeracy in the school and the quality of the provision in the nursery unit; and
3. the quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

St Malachy's Primary School and Nursery Unit is situated in the Markets area of East Belfast. The school draws almost all of its children from the immediate area. The enrolment has increased steadily over the last four years and currently stands at 298 children in the primary school and 52 in the nursery unit. At the time of inspection, almost 60% of the children were entitled to free school meals and just over 22% were on the special needs register. Approximately 30% of the children are newcomers.

St Malachy's Primary School	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	248	263	295	298
% Attendance	93.7	92.5	93.5	93.8
% Attendance for those children on the SEN Register	92.1	91.7	94.1	93.8
Percentage of pupils entitled to Free School Meals	52.0	54.9	56.8	58.8
% of children on SEN register	22.0	19.0	22.5	22.6
No. of children with statements of educational needs	11	11	14	14
No. of newcomers	83	102	92	86

Source: data as held by the school.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

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

5. Achievements and standards

- Across the key stages, the children are very well-behaved and eager to learn. They listen attentively in class and are respectful of their teachers, each other and visitors. The children settle well to the learning tasks when provided with interesting and appropriately differentiated learning activities, they become more actively engaged in the lessons and demonstrate independence and flexibility in their learning and thinking.
- The standards in literacy and numeracy are satisfactory. The most able children in year 7 read with fluency and expression and can discuss plot and character in some detail. They write in a variety of forms with an appropriate level of detail and vocabulary and can plan, edit and review their writing to make improvements. Throughout the school, the children engage in class and group discussions; however, their talking and listening skills need to be developed further. By year 7, the most able children are secure in their understanding of mental mathematics and are knowledgeable in the majority of the areas of the mathematics curriculum. Throughout the school, the children would benefit from more opportunities to develop their understanding and use of mathematical language.
- The school's internal performance data indicates that: in English, most of the children are making progress in line with their ability or above expectation; and in mathematics, the majority of the children are making progress in line with their ability or above expectation. A significant minority of children who require assistance with their learning are achieving in line with or above their ability in English and mathematics.

- During the inspection, a minority of the children in the nursery unit played together amicably and there were instances of purposeful play. There were some opportunities for the children to mark make as they took 'orders' in the cafe. The children have created representational paintings which have been used to create a colourful display in the playrooms. Overall, however, the children's achievements are under developed for the time of year.
- The children enjoy and make use of information and communication technology (ICT) in a variety of settings, including: researching information for topic work; designing and delivering presentations; word processing and drafting; and basic programming. They use ICT software programs and programmable devices in literacy and numeracy activities.

6. Provision

- In the most effective practice, in the majority of lessons observed, the teaching is well paced and builds on the children's prior learning and understanding. The teachers use effective questioning and plenary sessions to extend the children's thinking and consolidate their learning. The children benefit from well-planned opportunities to work collaboratively in pairs and in small groups and to take appropriate responsibility for their own learning. Good use is made of ICT as a tool for learning. In the less effective practice, in a significant minority of lessons, there is limited use of effective assessment for learning strategies, and insufficient differentiation in the teachers' planning and classroom practice to meet the children's learning needs.
- The senior leadership team has identified appropriately the need to review and broaden the current range of assessment for learning strategies and assessment of learning strategies to ensure there is sufficient qualitative and quantitative assessment information to evaluate the children's progress in line with their ability.
- The teachers in the foundation stage and key stage (KS) 1 have appropriately identified the need to develop further the planning and provision for play and activity-based learning.
- Throughout the school, the children have limited opportunities to develop their talking and listening skills across all areas of learning. The staff need to promote the children's confidence to share their ideas through discussion, group work and effective plenary sessions. The teachers in the foundation stage need to ensure that the children are provided with more opportunities to develop their independent writing. The staff have identified appropriately the need to develop further the planning for writing to ensure that all children have opportunities to write in a range of forms and for a variety of audiences and purposes.
- There is a variation in the effectiveness of the mental mathematics sessions across the school; in the most effective practice, the mental mathematics session is well-paced and provides the children with opportunities to practice, in an active and interesting way, the key skills they would need to employ later in the lesson. There is a need for all teachers to provide more opportunities for the children to engage in problem-solving, problem-posing and investigative activities, in order to develop further their mathematical thinking alongside their understanding and use of mathematical language. The recent focus on the development of a more topic-based approach provides a more meaningful everyday context for using mathematics and enables the children to transfer their mathematical knowledge and skills to other areas of the curriculum. This effective practice needs to be disseminated to all classes.

- The inclusive ethos of the school benefits the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning. A range of support strategies is in place for under- and low-achieving children to develop their confidence and overcome their barriers to learning. A key strength of this provision is the nurture class which provides high quality support for the children with additional, social and emotional needs. The special educational needs co-ordinator has appropriately identified the need for the class teachers to take ownership for writing individual education plans to ensure there is a shared understanding of the strategies to be implemented to meet better each child's needs. This is at an early stage and it will be important that the teachers make more effective use of assessment and diagnostic data in order to track the children's progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention strategies in place to raise further the standards the children achieve.
- The nursery programme is under-developed and the planned activities do not provide sufficient challenge for children nearing the end of their pre-school year. There is an urgent need for the nursery teachers to develop further the planning to provide a broader, more balanced educational programme which ensures appropriate progression in learning. The staff make limited observations of the children's responses to play; however, the observations need to be used more effectively to inform the planning and better meet the specific needs of all of the children. The children who require support with aspects of their learning are well supported by their individual classroom assistants. The staff are caring and often sit with the children and join in their play. There is a need to improve further the quality of the adult interactions with the children to ensure that the opportunities for learning are exploited fully.
- The children learn within a caring and supportive environment; there is a strong sense of community which reflects the integrated ethos of the school and nursery unit. The children show a pride in their school. The extensive and attractive displays, throughout the school, enhance the learning environment and place value on the children's work. The school and grounds are maintained to a very high standard, and the support staff contribute well to the smooth running of the school. The children are given good opportunities to take on roles of responsibility through their involvement in the playground 'Buddy System,' the school council and the Eco-committee. The children's questionnaire called 'Happy Forms' gives the children an opportunity to have their views sought as part of the school development planning process; during discussions with the children, they spoke positively about this practice. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular opportunities for the children which includes, sports, creative and expressive and personal and social development activities. Through these activities, the children have the opportunity to develop further their skills, abilities and confidence.
- The school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity thereby encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The senior leadership team have identified accurately, with the support of the governors and staff, significant areas for improvement in the school's achievements and standards, learning and teaching, and in leadership and management. The principal, in his short time in post, has sought the views of the staff, children and governors to inform the school development plan and to re-establish a culture and ethos of collegiality and self-evaluation throughout the school to effect improvement.

- There have been a number of significant changes in leadership and co-ordinator roles within the school over the last year. The principal has been care-taking the key curricular areas of numeracy and special educational needs along with the role of designated teacher for safeguarding. Leading these areas has placed significant demands and constraints on his time and workload. There is an urgent need for the senior leadership and the governors of the school to complete the review and re-organisation of middle management roles as soon as possible, in order to afford the school the stability it requires in developing further the curriculum and the children's learning experiences.
- The co-ordinators, both new and existing, need to monitor and evaluate more rigorously the quality of the children's learning experiences and attainments.
- The school development plan contains a number of areas for development, covering a three-year period which needs to be prioritised in light of the inspection findings. The associated action plans lack measurable targets to enable management at all levels to monitor and evaluate rigorously the children's progress in order to effect improvement.
- There are significant weaknesses in the leadership and management of the nursery unit. The nursery unit staff need to develop a robust culture of self-evaluation leading to improvement in the quality of planning, teaching, learning and assessment.
- The principal needs to work more closely with the head of the nursery unit to monitor and evaluate the provision for learning and the standards the children achieve.
- The school has good links with the parents and is well-connected to the local community. Effective use is made of the adjacent community youth centre for physical education and after-school provision. During the school year, appropriate procedures are in place in the school and nursery unit to keep parents informed about their child's progress. The school makes good use of a wide range of visitors and external agencies to provide additional support for the children and to enhance their educational experiences.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the parents, staff and school community can have confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. Under the leadership of the new principal, the governors report that they receive more detailed information on action plans including costings, and how the action plans are linked and tracked within the school development planning process to effect improvement. It will be important for the governors to exercise their challenge function to monitor and evaluate rigorously the work of the school in addressing the significant areas for improvement identified in the report.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school and nursery unit have satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The following area needs to be addressed: develop policies for risk assessments and educational trips.
- The children report that they feel safe in school and know who to speak to if they have any concerns about their well-being

8. Conclusion

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

The areas for improvement are the need to:

- raise further the standards in literacy and numeracy attained by the children;
- develop further the planning, teaching, and assessment for learning in order to improve the children's learning experiences;
- ensure that leadership and management at all levels apply a more strategic approach to self-evaluation, action-planning and target setting leading to sustained school improvement;
- improve the quality of leadership and management and the provision for learning in nursery unit in order to raise further the standards the children achieve; and
- address the health and safety issues outlined in an appendix to this report.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-18 month period.

Health and safety

1. The employing authority and board of governors need to address urgently the provision of safer access arrangements to the mobile classrooms.
2. The security mechanisms on the front door of the school and the nursery unit were not working during the inspection. The school needs to carry out a risk assessment and put in place contingency measures to ensure the safety of the children until the repairs are carried out.

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