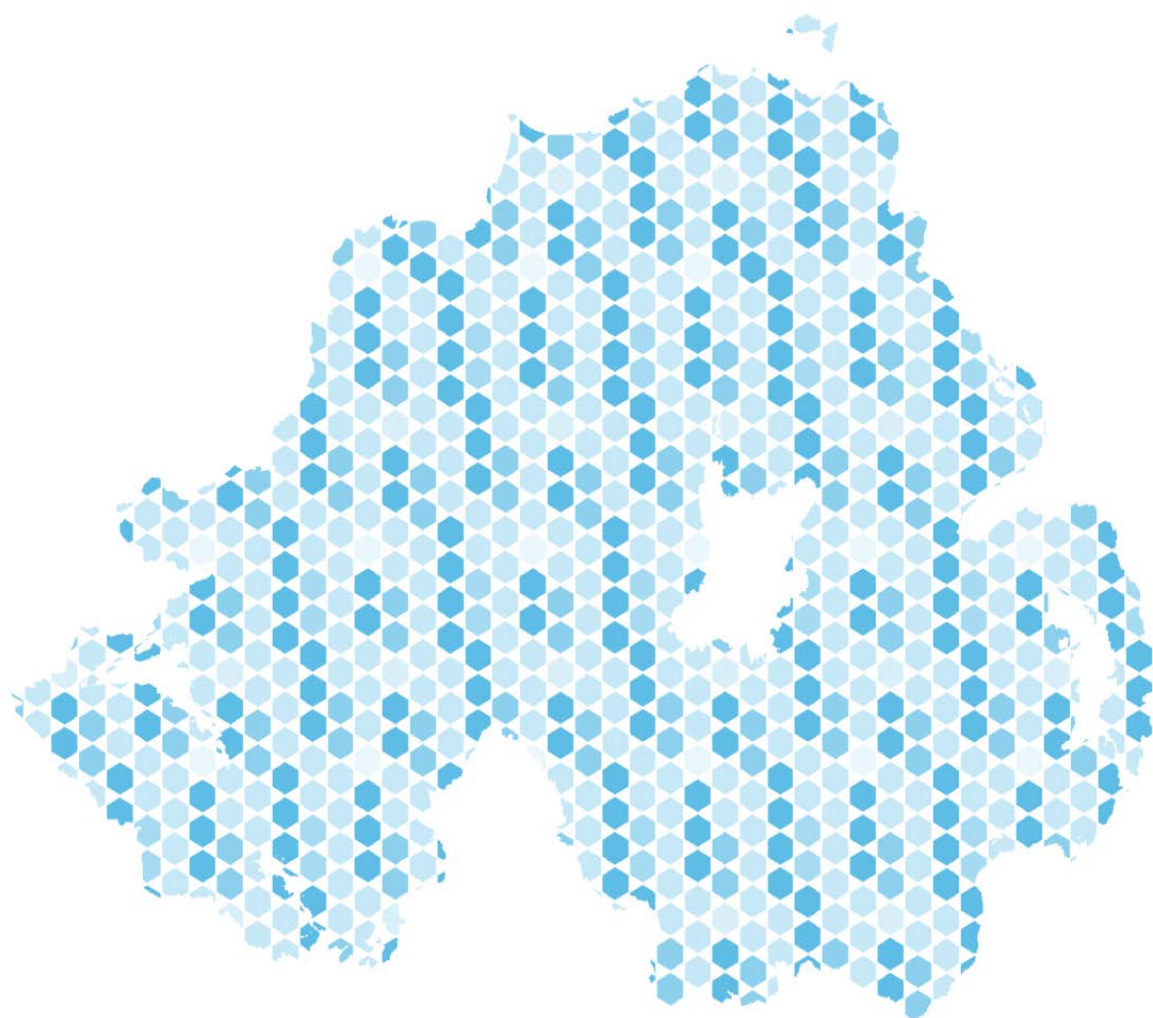


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Malachy's Primary School,
Coleraine, Co Londonderry

Report of an Inspection in
March 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
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 Inspectorate's 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	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	185	73 ¹	39%	21
Teaching staff	9	9	100%	*
Teaching support staff	9	9	100%	*
Support staff	*	*	100%	*

* fewer than 5.

The majority of the responses to the parental questionnaire indicated very high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the school's educational and pastoral provision. In the written comments, the parents highlighted the welcoming ethos and the friendly and approachable staff. All of the questionnaire responses from the teaching and support staff were positive about all aspects of the school. The comments, including issues raised by a small number of parents, were shared with the principal and the governors.

2. Context

St. Malachy's Primary School is situated in the town of Coleraine in the Parish of St Malachy's. Most of the children who attend come from within the Parish. The school enrolment has remained steady over the past four years and includes a large number of newcomer children. At the time of the inspection approximately 27% of the children in the school were newcomers, almost all of whom were from a Polish background, while small numbers are from China, Nigeria, Philippines and Romania. The school have a small number of reception age children, who are not of statutory school age, and are accommodated in a composite class along with Year 1 children.

¹ The ETI is trialling a range of methods to collect the views of parents/carers and, as a result, the response rate may be low.

St Malachy's Primary School	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Enrolment	236	224	235	233
% Attendance (NI Average)	95.7%	95.9%	95.5%	N/A
FSME Percentage ²	15.7%	20.5%	18.7%	21.9%
% (No) of children on SEN register	9.7%	12.9%	10.2%	8.2%
No. of children with statements of educational needs	*	*	*	*
No. of newcomers	35	35	33	41

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 under-achievement where applicable;
- the quality of provision in the school; and,
- the quality of leadership and management.

4. Overall finding

Overall Performance Level	Good
Achievements and Standards	Very good
Provision	Good
Leadership and Management	Good

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are highly motivated and engage enthusiastically in their learning. They collaborate well in paired and group work; enjoy role play and other drama activities and respond readily during whole-class discussions, displaying mutual respect and listening to each other's ideas. They develop well their thinking skills, notably in problem-solving and investigative activities.
- An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data, in three³ of the past four years, shows that in mathematics, the school's performance is consistently at or above the Northern Ireland (NI) average. In English, the performance is below the NI average in two of the three years evaluated. Compared with schools in

² The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

³ 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.

the same free school meals category (FSM), the levels of attainment in English are below the average in each of the three years and in mathematics are above the average in two of the three years. The KS outcomes should be interpreted with caution, due to the number of newcomer children arriving at different points throughout KS2 which has a significant impact on the overall outcomes.

- The school's internal performance data indicates that most of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make good progress in English and very good progress in mathematics and are achieving standards in line with their ability or above expectation. The newcomer children are making very good progress in mathematics and with targeted support are overcoming the barriers to becoming functional in English as an additional language.
- The children in the reception provision are well-settled; play purposefully and collaboratively with others in the composite class. They have good levels of concentration and enjoy the whole-class story sessions; they join in very enthusiastically in songs and rhymes. The staff need to ensure that the reception children have greater opportunities to develop their interest in early writing.
- By the end of KS2, the children read with fluency, expression and enjoyment, displaying high levels of understanding. Across the year groups the children articulate confidently their views and opinions, and their written communication is also of a very good standard. By the end of KS2 most of the children talk with enthusiasm about, and have a very good understanding of their work in mathematics. They are able to apply a good variety of strategies for solving mathematical problems across a range of areas including number, measures, shape and space.
- By the end of KS2, most of the children make very good use of information communication technology (ICT); for example, participating in video conferencing, creating animations and digital presentations, researching information for topic work and managing data.

6. Provision

- The quality of the teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding; almost all of the teaching was good or better with approximately two-fifths evaluated as very good or outstanding. In the most effective practice, the teachers provide creative and challenging activities and connect the children's learning in a meaningful way through the use of topics, novels and real-life contexts. They use skilful questioning to encourage the children to give extended responses, develop further their thinking and problem-solving skills and to consolidate the learning at the end of the lesson. Although the composite nature of many of the classes places considerable demands on the teachers in terms of planning and classroom organisation, they are managed effectively with an approach that provides well for the needs of all of the children.

- The quality and format for planning the curriculum is inconsistent across the school. In the best practice, in the majority of classes, the teachers identify clearly the intended learning and include differentiated learning strategies to meet the needs of all of the children. In these classes the teachers make detailed evaluations of the children's learning and make good use of these evaluations to inform future planning. All of the teachers mark the children's work regularly with supportive comments. In the most effective practice the teachers identify clearly how the children can make improvements to their work. This good practice in planning and assessment should be disseminated across all classes.
- The provision for the reception aged children is satisfactory. There is a need for the school to ensure that the children in the reception provision have access to a broader and more balanced pre-school curriculum, to meet better their varying needs and reflect more effectively the pre-school curricular guidance.
- A particular strength of the provision for literacy is the wide range of meaningful opportunities for the children to write independently across the curriculum. Where the provision is most effective, class novels are used well as a medium for the teaching of a range of literacy elements and also to enhance the children's interest and understanding across other areas of the curriculum. There is effective support to help the newcomer children to settle and develop their language skills. The school has introduced, in a small number of classes, an additional reading programme in order to foster a greater enjoyment of reading and love of books; it is beginning to have a positive impact on the children's reading.
- Across the key stages, the children benefit from a broad and balanced programme for mathematics with coverage of number, weight, estimation, shape and space, measures and handling data. They have good opportunities to investigate and problem solve. Across the school, the children enjoy the practical activities and ICT is used well to support numeracy in KS1. In the most effective practice the children are encouraged to problem solve within a real-life context, to explain their mathematical reasoning and to articulate, clarify and extend their mathematical thinking.
- In most of the classes, the children who require additional support with their learning receive good support from the class teachers and the very effective classroom assistants. The teachers identify, at an early stage, those children who require support for literacy and a small number of these children benefit from effective targeted withdrawal support in reading. The school has just begun to provide targeted numeracy support for children identified as potentially underachieving in mathematics. In order to improve the provision further, it will be important for the special educational needs co-ordinator to develop a more rigorous method for the tracking of all of the children with additional learning needs, in order to demonstrate more effectively the progress they are making.
- The school's arrangements for pastoral care are of a high quality. There is a friendly and welcoming ethos in the school with an atmosphere of mutual respect. The children's behaviour is exemplary and the newcomer children are integrated well within the school community. There is an inclusive ethos in the school, in which the rich cultural diversity is welcomed, celebrated and valued. Through the active school council the children are able to put forward ideas for

improving the school and the playground. There is a strong focus on rewarding the children's effort and attainment through the merit reward system. The children's holistic development is prioritised within the school through the very good opportunities for physical activity, spiritual awareness, cultural activities and the current focus on attaining the Rights Respecting Schools award.

- The school gives very good attention to promoting a healthy lifestyle through the policy on healthy breaks, the curricular focus on healthy lifestyle choices and through the varied range of extra-curricular physical activities on offer.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership team has worked very effectively to develop collegiality amongst the whole staff; to establish good working relationships amongst all members of the school community, including newcomer families, and to ensure a positive, inclusive ethos and a strong commitment to the pastoral care of the children and the staff.
- The principal has consulted widely with the school community in order to inform fully the school development planning process. The teachers have made a good start to using assessment data and gather other information, to identify whole-school targets and to track the children's progress. The current action plans need to have a sharper focus on raising further the standards of the children with clear strategies on how the improvements in the children's outcomes will be monitored. The leadership team needs to work closely with the co-ordinators to develop a more strategic and coherent approach to self-evaluation, including more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the quality of the provision.
- A small number of staff are currently undertaking a continuing professional development course in literacy for children with specific learning difficulties. The principal should now include this important work in the school development plan with an appropriate action plan to ensure that it is effectively disseminated and implemented by all of the teaching staff and that the impact on the children's learning is appropriately monitored.
- The school has developed very effective links with the local community and local schools and has taken part in a wide range of projects and initiatives. Through these links the children have good opportunities to work closely with their peers in other maintained and controlled primary schools on a range of curricular themes and topics. The school also takes part in local competitions in music and sport. The parents are kept informed about the life and work of the school through the fortnightly St Malachy's Times newsletter and are given good curricular information through additional class newsletters in the Foundation Stage. The school has recently sent a questionnaire to all parents to seek their views and are in the process of addressing the areas that have been highlighted.
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the parents, staff and school community can have a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are actively involved in the work of the school and the range of expertise across the governors is used to provide a challenge function in relation to finance, curriculum, and standards and achievements.

- 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 relevant Department but the following minor areas need to be addressed:
 - a number of the policies relating to safeguarding and pastoral care need to be updated to reflect more fully the practices and procedures within the school; and
 - all staff need to complete the planned refresher training for safeguarding.
- In discussions with the year 6 children, they reported that they feel safe and secure in school and know who to talk to if they have any concerns about their well-being.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address.

The area for improvement is that:

- the leadership team needs to work closely with the co-ordinators to develop a more strategic and coherent approach to self-evaluation, including more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the quality of the provision.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor, through district inspection activity, the school's progress on the area for improvement.

Health and safety

- There are no visibility panels in almost all of the classroom and office doors.
- The current arrangements and facilities for staff car parking and the safe dropping off and collection of children are inadequate and leave no safe access for emergency vehicles at the school.
- The perimeter fencing of the school is not sufficient to provide secure, controlled access to the grounds.

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