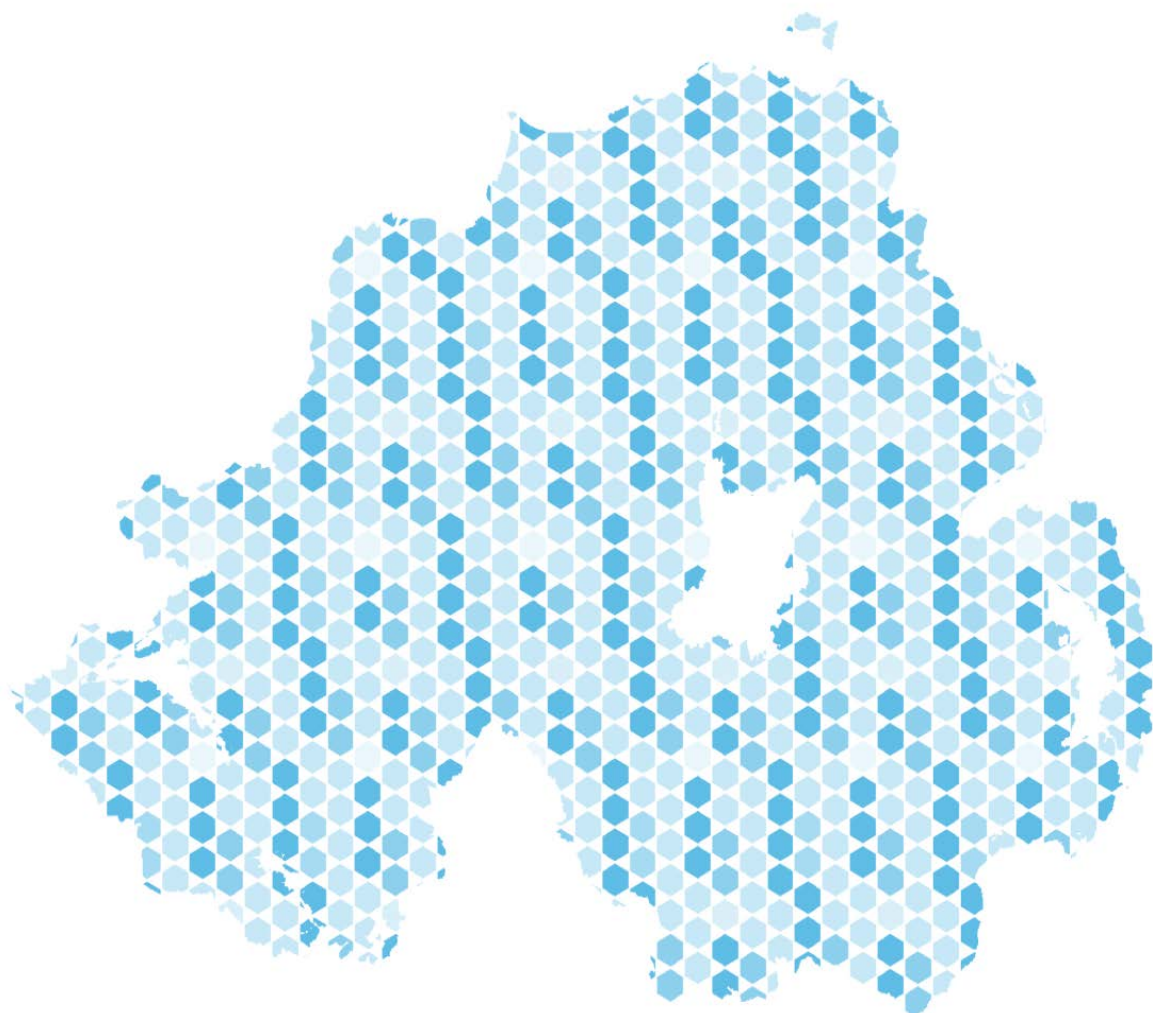


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Mary's Primary School and
Nursery Unit, Banbridge,
Co Down

Report of an Inspection in
November 2013



Providing Inspection Services for

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



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

Contents

Section	Page
1. Inspection method and evidence base	1
2. Context	1
3. Focus of inspection	2
4. Overall finding	2
5. Achievements and standards	2
6. Provision	3
7. Leadership and management	5
8. Conclusion	5

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 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. The responses to the parental questionnaires indicated that there were high levels of satisfaction with the primary school and nursery unit overall. In the written responses, almost all of the parents reported that they value all aspects of the school's provision and the approachable, dedicated staff. All of the comments raised in the questionnaires were shared with the principal and the governors.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	249	43	17%	23
Teaching staff	21	18	86%	*
Teaching support staff	15	6	40%	*
Support staff	31	6	19%	*

* Fewer than 5.

The 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 parent questionnaires may be low.

2. Context

St Mary's Primary School and Nursery Unit is situated in Banbridge, County Down. The children attend mainly from the surrounding area. The school enrolment has risen sharply this year and is currently 475, including 28 children in the nursery unit and 26 children in the three learning support classes (LSC). There is a funded playgroup located in the school grounds which was previously inspected in 2010. In addition, at the time of the inspection, there was a third unregistered group of 20 pre-school children; this additional pre-school provision has since been discontinued by the principal. Approximately 30% of the children are entitled to free school meals and 31%, including the children in the learning support classes, require additional help with aspects of their learning.

St Mary's Primary School and Nursery Unit	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Enrolment	404	401	427	475
% Attendance	94.8%	95.4%	94.7%	-
FSME Percentage ¹	24.4%	29%	34%	30%
% (No) of children on SEN register	27% (96)	33% (124)	35% (136)	31% (146)
No. of children with statements of educational needs	50	43	44	37
No. of newcomers	23	22	31	27

Source: data as held by the school.

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, the nursery unit and the learning support classes (LSC); and
- the quality of leadership and management.

The inspection findings on achievements and standards and quality of provision for learning do not include consideration of the provision in the unregistered pre-school group.

4. Overall finding

Overall Performance Level	Satisfactory
Achievements and Standards	Good
Provision	Good
Leadership and Management	Inadequate
Learning Support Classes (LSC)	Very good
Nursery Unit (NU)	Good

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are polite and well-behaved and have a positive attitude to all aspects of their learning. Almost all, including the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning, engage easily with adults and with one another. As they progress through the school, most of the children are developing well their abilities to express and explain their thinking, carry out a variety of roles and responsibilities in paired and group work with increasing maturity and confidence and make decisions about their learning.

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

- Overall, most of the children attain good standards in most aspects of their literacy and numeracy. Most of the children in year 7 enjoy reading classic novels and writing poetry, and all are taking roles and making short films to represent their ideas related to meaningful themes, for example, the Victorians and anti-bullying. In mathematics, a majority of the children are becoming proficient in articulating the processes they are applying and they make increasingly accurate use of the key mathematical vocabulary to explain their reasoning. They use mental strategies well and show flexibility in their approach to investigative activities.
- An analysis of the end of key stage 2 performance data over three years², shows that the school's performance in English and mathematics has been below the Northern Ireland (NI) average. When compared with schools in the same free meals category, the children's performance in English and mathematics has been above the average for similar schools for two of the three years and below in one.
- By year 7, most of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make good progress in English and mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation. The school can demonstrate the significant improvement to the outcomes for individual children, particularly those identified with additional learning needs.
- The children in the nursery unit (NU) are very well-settled; they spend extended periods engaging in purposeful and productive play and most of the children create representational work of a very high standard. The children are developing good levels of independence and are making good progress in all areas of the pre-school curriculum.
- The children receiving additional help with their learning, including those in the learning support classes (LSC), achieve very good standards. The LSC staff have high expectations for the children's work and behaviour in meeting their individual special educational needs and in enabling the children's fullest integration with their peers.
- The children's achievements and standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are very good. The use of information and communication technology (ICT), including in the LSC, and the development of the children's skills is an integral part of the curriculum; the children use innovative technologies confidently and creatively.

6. Provision for learning

- Nearly all of the teaching was good or better with over half being very good or better. In these lessons, the teachers build effectively on the children's prior learning, and deepen their understanding of important concepts in well-structured and creative contexts which include appropriate challenge for all. The most effective literacy lessons integrate successfully the reading, writing and listening and speaking elements through the skilful connected learning and teaching of history, science and technology and mathematics. In a few classes,

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.

the organisation of the learning activities and the over-reliance on too narrow a range of teaching strategies restricted the children's scope to make choices and to articulate their thinking. Overall, the teachers' written planning is effective and informs well the day-to-day learning and teaching. The staff in the nursery unit and LSC know the children very well and use appropriate methods of planning and assessment to design an interesting and varied programme to meet the children's individual needs. The teachers in year 1 and year 2 need to manage more effectively the children's transition from the nursery provision to the foundation stage taking greater account of the children's progress and development in order to improve the progression, pace and challenge in the learning and standards attained in the foundation stage.

- The emphasis on the breadth of writing styles, on purposeful reading and on the development of language to communicate clearly is developing the children as confident writers and readers. A key strength of the provision for literacy is the focus placed on meeting the children's individual learning needs through rigorous assessment of their progress which links well to the planning for the withdrawal and booster sessions. The quality of the interaction between the staff and the children in the nursery unit is consistently of a very high standard.
- The teachers provide a suitably broad range of engaging mathematical experiences throughout the school. Mental mathematics is being developed well and, as they progress through the key stages, the children apply and develop well their understanding of number and processes. The children are benefitting from the focus the school has placed on developing the teachers in their implementation of the mathematics programme. The teachers' overt use and reinforcement of the strategies and associated mathematical thinking enables the children to verbalise more clearly their ideas and the processes they are selecting and using. The teachers integrate ICT well into classroom activities to support, enrich and extend the children's mathematical learning.
- The overall quality of the provision in the LSC and for special educational needs is very good. The staff differentiate effectively the learning to suit the individual needs of the children. As a result, almost all of the children are fully engaged in the lessons and achieve well. The learning experiences provided in all three learning support classes are relevant, innovative and stimulating. The school has well-established and extensive inter-agency links which are used effectively to support the children's learning and well-being. The classroom assistants support the children's learning very well.
- The pastoral care in the school is good overall. There is effective development of equality and diversity and, as a result, an inclusive ethos characterises the school. The children have meaningful opportunities to express their views and contribute to the decision making process in the school council and eco-council. The 'playground buddies' make a significant contribution to the well-being of the younger children. The children's wider interests and confidence are enhanced further through their participation in a wide range of extra-curricular social, cultural and sporting activities.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting a healthy lifestyle through the healthy eating initiatives and through the wide range of sports and physical activities on offer to the children.

7. Leadership and management

- The principal has developed effectively the roles and responsibilities of the curriculum teams, the co-ordinators and the entire staff to bring about key improvements in all aspects of the school's provision. The staff's successful work has focused tirelessly on meeting and contributing significantly to the children's all-round learning and development. The senior leadership team is committed to ensuring the additional learning needs of all children are met within a supportive ethos.
- Self-evaluation is a well-embedded practice of school life. The current school development plan has involved appropriate consultation. The school makes effective use of all of the available information and the associated action plans match closely the school's key priorities. Together with literacy and numeracy, special educational needs is featured prominently in the school development plan and substantial resources are allocated to high quality withdrawal work.
- The school has effective links with the parents and wider community; the active parents' association contributes significantly to the life and work of the school.
- The governors carry out their roles supportively; they understand most of the curricular and pastoral challenges and opportunities facing the school. Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the parents, staff and school community can have limited confidence in the aspects of governance inspected. There is an aspect of governance to review urgently, namely:
 - governors must keep themselves fully informed of all aspects of the work of the school and put in place more robust arrangements for requiring the principal to bring to their attention all statutory and legal matters for which they have ultimate accountability.
- During the inspection, the inspectors met with a group of year six children. They reported that they are very happy and feel safe in school and know who to speak to if they have any concerns. As indicated in the context section of this report, at the time of the inspection in addition to the two registered groups of pre-school children, the school was making educational provision for a third group of 20 pre-school age children. It has since been confirmed by the Employing Authority that this group of children constituted neither a reception class nor a playgroup, and that it was not registered. On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school's arrangements for safeguarding this group of children are unsatisfactory and do not adequately reflect the guidance issued by the relevant department(s). In particular, as a matter of urgency, the governors and the principal need to:
 - ensure that all arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.

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 relation to leadership and management, governance and safeguarding the children which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively. There is an urgent need for the principal and governors to:

- put in place more robust accountability arrangements at all levels; and,
- ensure that all arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.

The district inspector will return within six working weeks to monitor progress towards addressing the safeguarding issue. 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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