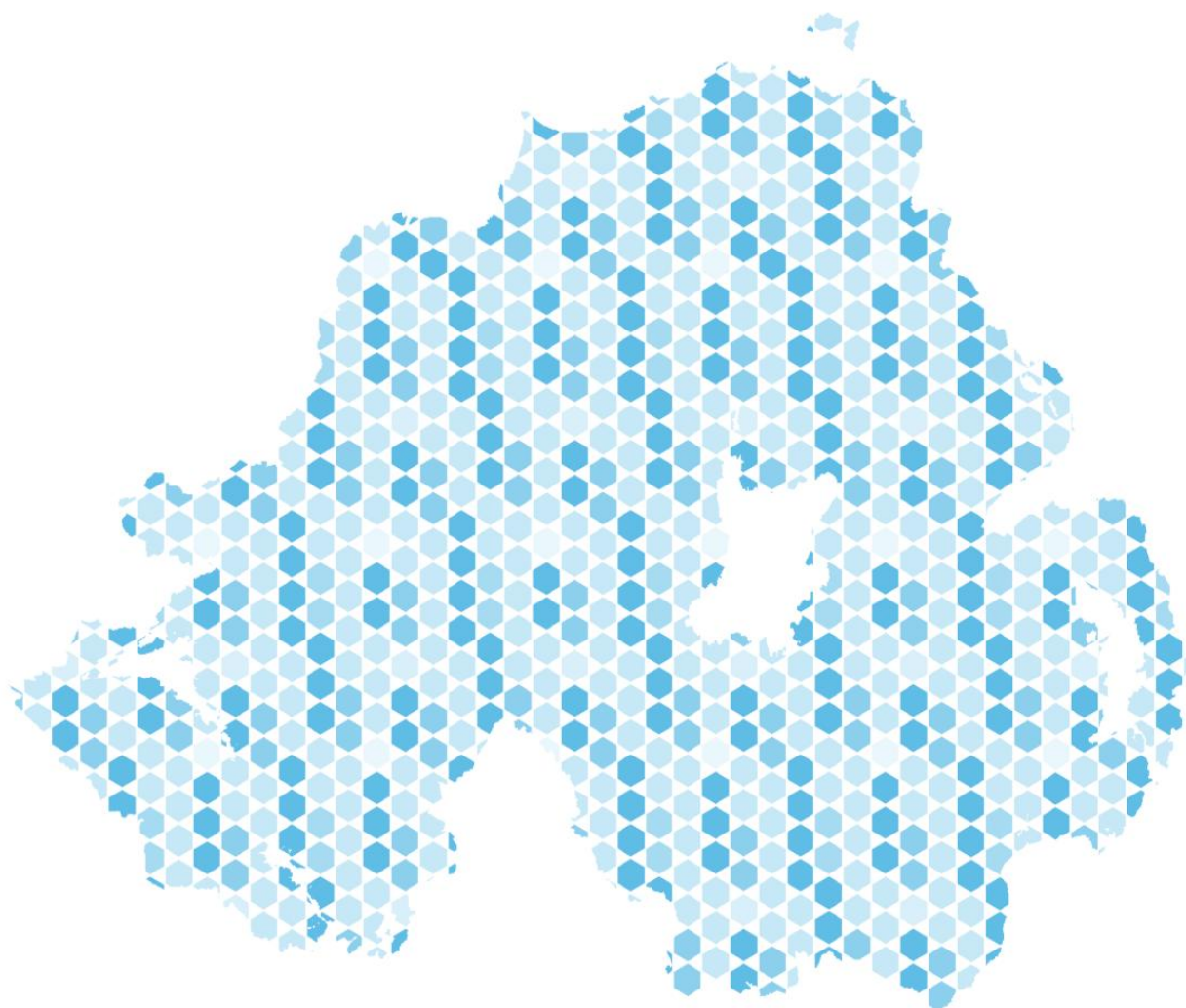


PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Mary's Primary School and
Nursery Unit, Bellaghy,
Co Londonderry

Report of an Inspection in
October 2014



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

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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 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-five percent of parents and almost all of the staff (teaching and non-teaching) responded to the questionnaires. The responses to the parental questionnaires indicated high levels of satisfaction with and support for the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted their children's progress and the child-centred learning environment where their children feel safe and happy. They praised the work of the staff and the individual care and attention given to the children. The responses to the staff questionnaires emphasised the quality of the working relationships across the school and the commitment to ensuring the best for the children. ETI has reported to the principal and a 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 [including the nursery unit]; and
3. the quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

St Mary's Primary School and Nursery Unit is situated in the village of Bellaghy, County Londonderry. Most of the children attending the school come from the village and surrounding area. The enrolment stands at 214 children, 30 of whom are in the nursery unit. At the time of the inspection, almost 16% of the children were entitled to receive free school meals and 15% were identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

St Mary's Primary School and Nursery Unit	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	206	205	209	214
% Attendance	96.9	97.3	97.9	99.5
FSME Percentage ¹	16	16.7	15.4	15.8
% of children on SEN register	10.6	8.9	11	15.4
No. of children with statements of educational needs	*	*	*	*
No. of newcomers	*	*	*	*

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

4. Overall findings of the inspection

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

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are welcoming and friendly, and their behaviour is excellent. They are enthusiastic, well-motivated learners who take pride in their work and achievements. They work well in pairs and small groups showing sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others. From an early age, they are able to reflect on and manage their own learning, as they develop their thinking skills and personal capabilities.
- The school's performance data shows that most children make very good progress in English and mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation. The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning participate confidently in all aspects of school life and a majority of them make good progress in mathematics and English, in line with their ability or above expectation.
- The children apply their learning in literacy and numeracy skilfully across the curriculum and in real-life settings. The children write purposefully in a variety of genre for different audiences and present their work to a very high standard. During the inspection, the children read fluently and with expression and talked enthusiastically about a range of authors. The children engage confidently in investigative, problem-solving activities, and enjoy mathematical challenges within and beyond the classroom. They deploy a range of strategies, use the appropriate mathematical language and show flexibility in their thinking.

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

- The children in the nursery unit are well settled and happy to explore the many interesting activities provided. A majority of the children show good levels of confidence and independence in their work and play; they produce representational work of a high standard. A small number show an interest in early mark making and are attempting to write their own name. The children are becoming familiar with the routines and the appropriate use of resources in the different play areas. They engage readily with the staff and their peers and most listen attentively during group story sessions.
- The children have many well-planned opportunities to work with ICT resources which support and enhance their learning across the curriculum and develop their skills. They use ICT competently and across the school enjoy working with age-appropriate devices and software.

6. Provision

- The comprehensive and common approach to whole-school planning ensures coherence, continuity and progression in the children's learning. However, the short-term planning does not always take sufficient account of the needs and abilities of all the children. The teachers connect skilfully the children's learning across the curriculum and, in the best practice, evaluate effectively the learning to inform future planning and practice.
- The staff provide an attractive and stimulating learning environment and make creative use of the accommodation, including the outdoor learning space. The teaching assistants work very effectively in partnership with the teachers in supporting the children with their learning. In the best practice, the lessons observed met effectively the range of individual needs and abilities within the class and were well resourced, suitably paced and challenging. There was a clear focus on the learning and the teachers used effective questioning which enabled the children to reflect on and improve their learning.
- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified early through, for example, the close links with the nursery, the effective use of teacher observations and the analysis of internal performance data. The individual education plans guide well the learning and teaching and the intervention strategies are tailored to the particular needs of individual children or targeted groups. The children and their parents contribute meaningfully to the evaluation of the children's progress in meeting their individual targets.
- A key strength of the whole-school provision is the development of the children's literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. There are well-planned and incidental opportunities for the children to use their skills and knowledge in meaningful contexts. The children's play-based learning experiences provide them with very good opportunities to develop their language and enrich their mathematical understanding. The current focus on writing and problem-solving is evident in the teachers' planning, in the lessons observed and in the children's books.

- The programme for the children in the nursery ensures challenge and progression throughout the year. The children's progress and development are monitored closely by the staff and subsequent evaluations are used well to inform learning and teaching. The quality of the interaction between the staff and the children is consistently of a very high standard.
- The outstanding arrangements for the pastoral care provision is evident in the child-centred and inclusive ethos and in the staff's commitment to the children's welfare. The children benefit from the many opportunities to take on roles and responsibilities which increase their confidence and self-esteem, and support them in their learning. The children's views are sought and acted upon to involve them meaningfully in decision-making and their work and achievements are celebrated in high quality displays throughout the school.
- The school and nursery give very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, thereby encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership and management is characterised by the collegial, child-centred approach to all aspects of the work of the school and nursery unit. The effective teamwork among all staff supports well the self-evaluation process and ensures a coherent and consistent approach to the management and coordination of the curriculum.
- The school uses internal performance data very effectively to identify and address underachievement, track the progress of individuals and target groups of children, and highlight whole-school curriculum areas for development. The innovative and flexible intervention strategies to address underachievement are having a positive impact on the children's learning and attainment in literacy and numeracy.
- The school development plan sets out appropriate areas for improvement underpinned by action plans which are informed by consultation, analysis of performance data and the needs of the children. The key priorities concentrate on improving further the quality of the children's learning experiences and the standards they attain.
- The school and nursery unit have effective arrangements in place for communicating with the parents about their children's learning, and to involve them in the work of the school. The purposeful links with the local and wider community enrich the curriculum and develop further the children's skills and knowledge.
- The board of governors has been reconstituted and appropriate interim arrangements are in place until all posts are filled and roles and responsibilities agreed. 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.

- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school and nursery unit 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 spoke enthusiastically about their wider learning experiences. They reported that they feel safe and 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 and nursery unit is very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

Health and safety/Accommodation

1. The traffic congestion, due to lack of car parking facilities, presents safety concerns during drop-off and collection times for the children.
2. The school needs to review access arrangements to the school, in particular from the back entrance playground.

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