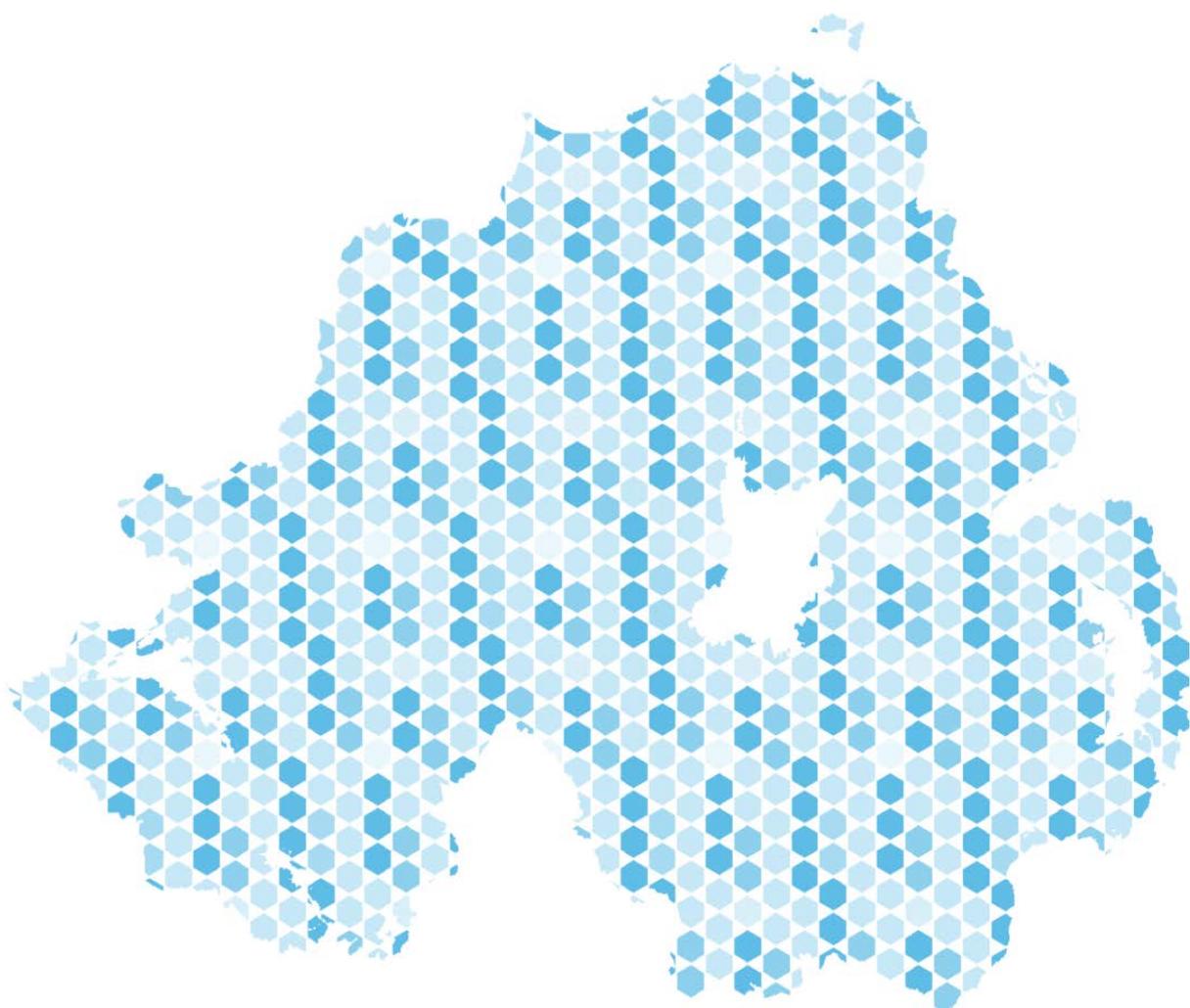


# PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Mary's Primary School,  
Aughlisnafin, Castlewellan

Report of an Inspection in  
June 2015

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*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  
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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 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(s) from the governors;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Six percent of parents and all of the teaching staff responded to the questionnaire. Almost all of 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 all staff under the leadership of the principal and how well they felt their children were prepared for the next stage of their education. The staff responses were very positive; they emphasised the positive working ethos and community spirit of the school. ETI has reported the outcomes of the questionnaire to the principal and the representative of the 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 provision in the school
3. the quality of leadership and management.

## **3. Context**

St Mary's Primary School, Aughlisnafin, is a maintained co-educational primary school in a rural setting about 2.5 miles from Castlewellan. The majority of children come from the area around the school as well as from Annsborough and Castlewellan. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals and those requiring additional learning support has remained steady over recent years.

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	155	160	166	169
% Attendance	95	95.3	96	97.3
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	28.2	30	28.9	28.6
% of children on SEN register	16	20	22.3	20.2
No. of children with statements of educational needs	5	*	*	*

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

\* fewer than 5

#### 4. Overall findings of the inspection

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

#### 5. Achievements and standards

- Throughout the school, the children are well-behaved and are keen to learn. They are respectful of the staff, listen well in class and engage enthusiastically in learning. They take great pride in their achievements and, when given the opportunity, demonstrate well their ability to make decisions, solve problems and be creative.
- The school's internal performance data shows that almost all of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make very good progress in English and mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation.
- Throughout the school the children talk confidently and listen respectfully to one another. They are encouraged, from the earliest stage, to share their views and opinions. The most able children in year 7 are enthusiastic, fluent readers who empathise with characters in novels and show a mature understanding of context and theme. As they progress through the year groups, the children write with increasing competence and accuracy but have insufficient experience in extending their writing.
- The children achieve good standards overall in numeracy. By year 7, the children are secure in their knowledge of key mathematical concepts and are confident and flexible in their thinking across all the areas of mathematics. They use mathematical language precisely and can, when given the opportunity, apply their understanding in real and relevant contexts.

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

- The children in the reception class are well settled; they have very good levels of concentration and attention, spending sustained periods persevering in and completing activities. They communicate well with each other and with staff and use mathematical language naturally in play.
- The children achieve good standards in using information and communication technology. They use a range of digital and programmable devices confidently and appropriately to support their learning.

## **6. Provision**

- All of the teaching observed during the inspection was effective; two thirds was very good or better. In the best practice, the lessons observed were stimulating and well structured. The teachers planned, assessed and evaluated well to ensure there was a clear focus on the learning and provided appropriate support to help all the children progress.
- The teachers provided very good opportunities for open-ended, collaborative work and used meaningful plenary sessions to consolidate the children's learning. The teachers all mark the children's work regularly with positive comments and, in the best practice, provide clear advice on how the children can improve the quality of their work. In order to improve further the good quality of learning, all teachers need to ensure appropriate levels of differentiation and provide further opportunities to challenge the more able children.
- The planning for literacy is comprehensive and guides well the progressive development of reading, writing and talking and listening. There are notable strengths in the foundation stage which support effectively the development of the children's communication skills through well-planned group work and play based learning sessions. The school's reading programme is systematic and rigorous and is used well to extend the children's skills, experiences and enjoyment of reading. The school have identified appropriately the need to extend further the children's writing experiences.
- The mathematics programme ensures progressive development across the key stages. In the best practice, the teachers make effective use of a range of practical materials, games and strategies to stimulate the children's mathematical curiosity and to reinforce their mathematical thinking. In the foundation stage, the children have well-planned opportunities to develop a good understanding of numeracy and to use appropriate practical mathematical language with increasing fluency during play- based learning and in lessons. As they progress through the school, the children do not have sufficient opportunities to apply their learning to problem-posing, problem-solving and investigative activities in real life contexts across the curriculum.
- The provision for the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning is very good. Early identification of need, through the use of a wide range of diagnostic tools, including teacher and parent observations, is a priority in the school. The individual education plans prioritise appropriate targets for the children and progress is monitored thoroughly. Withdrawal and classroom assistant support is highly effective in addressing children's individual needs; close liaison with class teachers ensures continuity of provision.

- The provision for the children in the reception class, is very good. The staff plan and provide an interesting, and increasingly challenging, pre-school programme that meets effectively the needs of all of the children.
- The school has very effective partnerships with the local and wider community for example, sporting links with local clubs and primary schools, the Castlewellan Heritage Second World War project, and the recently formed primary principals' group. All links are valued and enhance the children's positive attitudes, values and learning opportunities.
- The quality of pastoral care is very good. There is a caring, welcoming and inclusive ethos evident throughout the school. The children are proud of their school and they show care and respect for one another and for the staff. The children's successes in all areas of school life are valued and celebrated and there are a range of extra-curricular sporting and music activities that develop their confidence and social skills.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity through the promotion of healthy breaks and energetic physical activities, encouraging children to adopt healthy lifestyles. The school has a strong sporting tradition and children are current Northern Ireland champions in girls' cross-country.
- 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.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The senior leadership team is highly committed to the well-being of the children and staff and to ongoing improvement. There is a clear, shared vision for the development of the school based on a good knowledge of all aspects of school life. Good use is made of the school's internal performance data and consultation with staff and parents to identify appropriate priorities for improvement.
- The senior leadership is supported well by the co-ordinators who have made a good start in monitoring and evaluating the children's achievements and leading the change required to bring about improvements. Further development is necessary to enable senior leaders, co-ordinators and teachers to monitor and evaluate more rigorously the quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements and to raise the standards achieved by all the children.
- A comprehensive school development plan identifies key priorities for school improvement. Associated action plans do not focus sufficiently on the learning needs of the children and should be developed to guide better monitoring, evaluation and improvement.

- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors carry out their roles supportively and conscientiously and understand well the challenges and opportunities faced by the school. In order to develop further their knowledge of curriculum and standards, it is appropriate that governors extend their communication with and challenge to key post holders in the school.

## **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 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 senior leadership, co-ordinators and teachers need to monitor and evaluate more rigorously the quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements in order to raise further the standards attained by all the children.

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

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