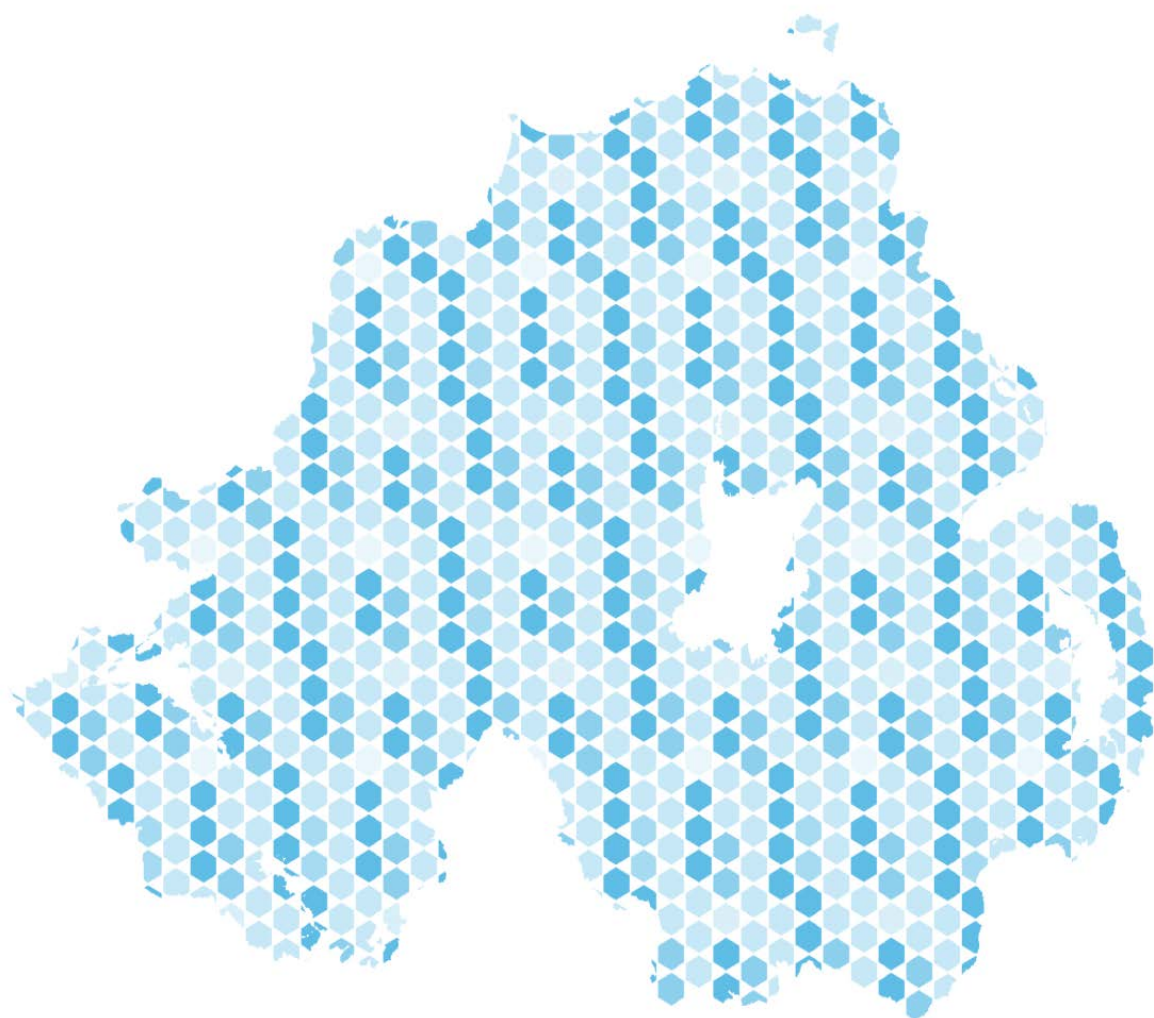


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Mary's Primary School,
Derrytrasna, Co Armagh

Report of an Inspection in
February 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 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 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 (total number in the school per category)	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	70	15	21.4%	8
Teaching staff	5	*	80%	*
Support staff	8	8	100%	*

* fewer than 5

The Education and Training Inspectorate (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 parental questionnaire may be low.

The responses to the parental questionnaires indicated high levels of support for and appreciation of the work of the school. In particular, the parents' written responses commented on: the helpful, approachable staff; the school's central role in the community; and the wide range of sporting, musical and ecological activities enjoyed by the children. The small number of concerns raised were discussed with the principal and the governors. Almost all of the teaching and support staff completed questionnaires and, in their highly positive responses, they expressed their support for the principal, their enjoyment of working in such a child-centred environment and their appreciation of the school's welcoming ethos.

2. Context

St Mary's Primary School is situated on the southern shore of Lough Neagh and serves the local rural community. Over the last four years, the enrolment has increased steadily from 89 in 2009-10 to 107 in the current school year. At the time of the inspection, just over 10% of the children were entitled to free school meals. The school has identified almost 16% of the children as having difficulties with aspects of their learning.

St Mary's Primary School	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Enrolment	91	97	102	107
% Attendance (NI Average)	96.4%	97.1%	96.4%	%
FSME Percentage ¹	9%	13%	8%	10.3%
% (No) of children on SEN register	19% (18)	12% (12)	17% (17)	15% (16)
No. of children with statements of educational needs	5	*	5	*
No. of newcomers	0	0	0	0

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 underachievement 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

- Almost all of the children are highly motivated and enjoy their learning. Their behaviour is exemplary and they settle quickly to work. The children interact well in pairs or small groups and engage readily with adults. They are developing as independent learners who manage their own work with maturity.
- An analysis of the end of key stage 2 performance data in three of the past four years shows that in English and mathematics the school's performance is consistently above the Northern Ireland (NI) average.² Compared with schools in the same free school meals (FSM) category, the performance in English and mathematics is above the average in two of the three years.³ The school's

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

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.

³ The key stage outcomes should be interpreted with caution for small primary schools as a large percentage change from year to year can often be attributed to a very small number of children.

internal performance data shows that most 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.

- In whole-class and group discussions, the children express their views with confidence and listen respectfully to one another. They write well for a range of audiences and purposes. In discussions with the year 7 children, they read fluently and with understanding and talked enthusiastically about their chosen texts. By the end of key stage 2, the children have a very good understanding of key mathematical concepts across all areas of the mathematics curriculum. They can complete mental calculations accurately and explain their thinking clearly, but use a limited range of mental strategies.
- The children in year 7 have participated in the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessments (CCEA) information and communication technology (ICT) Accreditation Scheme, and, in the last two years, have achieved standards above the Northern Ireland (NI) average.

6. Provision

- The teachers have recently reviewed and updated the medium-term and short-term planning. While the whole-school planning provides a clear overview and practical guidance for learning and teaching, the teachers should ensure that the differentiated approaches evident in the classrooms are reflected in their own planning. In the best practice, in about one half of the lessons observed, the teachers' evaluations inform well the future lessons.
- The quality of the teaching ranged from very good to satisfactory, with two-thirds of the lessons being good or very good. The very good practice was characterised by an appropriate level of challenge that matched the needs and abilities of the children. The well-structured lessons engaged the children and developed their independence. In the one-third of lessons which required improvement, the children were not engaged fully in the activities and there were missed opportunities to extend their learning. The children's work is marked regularly and positively, but marking for improvement strategies are not used consistently across the year groups.
- The quality of the provision for special educational needs is very good. The children's learning needs are identified early and appropriate interventions are provided in class. The children are integrated effectively into class and receive high levels of support from the classroom assistants.
- The very good quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is characterised by: the welcoming, child-centred ethos; the supportive, positive working relationships at all levels; and the effective emphasis on the holistic development of the children.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity thereby encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles through access to healthy breaks and lunches and a wide range of opportunities for active play, including sports coaching and exploring the local environment.

7. Leadership and management

- The senior leaders display a collegial approach to school improvement. They set high expectations for the children and the staff, focused clearly on achieving the highest possible standards in learning, teaching and pastoral care. They are using internal performance data well to identify low achievement and underachievement and to identify areas for development.
- The whole-school processes for self-evaluation and school development planning are good. To improve further these processes, it will be important for the board of governors and principal to develop the capacity of the curriculum leaders to contribute to the school improvement process through more systematic monitoring and evaluation of the provision and the quality of the learning and teaching in their respective areas. The school has effective arrangements for consulting the staff and the board of governors about the school development plan. It is appropriate that the school is planning to develop more effective and regular consultation with the parents about school development through the new school website.
- The school has outstanding educational links with the local community through business, industry, environmental agencies, social services, the playgroup and the local post-primary schools. The staff and principal have forged effective links with parents through detailed written reports, regular consultation meetings, curriculum evenings and a range of informal contacts.
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the parents, staff and school community can have confidence in most aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are well informed about finance, the impact of the school's accommodation on learning and teaching, and the school's place at the heart of the community. Their contribution to the life of the school can be developed further through reviewing first-hand evidence from the various post-holders about the impact of the teaching to improve further the quality of the learning experiences and the standards attained by the children.
- 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. In discussions with the inspectors, the year 6 and 7 children spoke with enthusiasm and confidence about their enjoyment of their lessons and the range of extra-curricular activities available to them. They reported that they feel happy 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 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. This is the need:

- to develop the capacity of curriculum leaders to contribute to the school improvement process through more systematic monitoring and evaluation of the quality of the learning and teaching in their respective areas of responsibility.

The ETI will monitor, through district inspection activity, the school's progress in the areas for improvement.

Health and safety/Accommodation

- The principal and administrative staff have to share a room for their work, which results, at times, in a lack of privacy regarding confidential matters.

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