

PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Mary's Primary School,
Killyleagh, Co Down

Report of an Inspection in
November 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
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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:

- two meetings with four representatives from the governors;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Fourteen percent of the parents responded to the questionnaires and almost all indicated high levels of satisfaction with the life and the work of the school. In particular, the parents' written responses commented on: the work of the newly appointed principal; the helpful approachable staff; the wide range of after-school activities available; and the very good levels of communication which keep them well-informed about their children's progress. Most of the teachers and the support staff completed questionnaires and almost all of their responses were positive. The ETI has reported to the principal and representatives of the board of governors and discussed with them the main issues emerging from the questionnaires.

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 for numeracy in the school; and
3. the quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

St Mary's Primary School is situated on the outskirts of Killyleagh, County Down. Over the past four years, the enrolment has declined steadily and currently stands at 97 children. Approximately 34% of the children are entitled to free schools meals and 34% of the children have been identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning. The school has experienced challenging staffing issues over the past number of years. The leadership of the school has undergone significant changes with the appointment of a new principal in June 2014 and a new vice-principal, who has recently been appointed. At the time of the inspection, the new vice-principal was not yet in post and there were three temporary teachers employed in the school. The board of governors has been reconstituted very recently and three new governors have been appointed.

St Mary's Primary School, Killyleagh	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	124	123	118	97
% Attendance (NI Average)	95.9	93.1	94.2	96.7
FSME Percentage ¹	34.67	31.70	36.44	34.02
% (No) of children on SEN register	20	29	28	34
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	Inadequate
Achievements and Standards	Inadequate
Provision	Inadequate
Leadership and Management	Satisfactory

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are enthusiastic and co-operate willingly with their teachers and with each other. As they progress through the school, they need to have more opportunities to develop their independence and creativity, and to become more competent in deploying and applying their personal and learning skills.
- The school's internal performance data shows that a significant minority of the children are making inadequate progress in English and mathematics in line with their ability. Across the school, the children's reading strategies and mathematical thinking are underdeveloped. By year 7, most of the children have a sound understanding of basic number operations but they are unable to think flexibly and employ a range of mental mathematics strategies to solve problems.
- Most of the children in literacy and the majority of children in numeracy who require additional support with aspects of their learning are working in line with their ability and reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Throughout the school, the children attain satisfactory standards in information and communication technology (ICT) and use it to enhance their learning.

6. Provision

- There is no long-term planning for literacy and numeracy. The principal has identified appropriately the need to develop long-term planning, as a priority, to ensure coherence and progression across the key stages in order to raise the low standards in literacy and numeracy. While the teachers have reviewed recently their short-term planning and have begun to include differentiated activities, there are limited opportunities in the planning for the children to develop their thinking skills and personal capabilities. The teachers need to review the quality of the planning and provision for play-based learning to develop more effectively the children's language and early mathematical skills.

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

- Most of the lessons observed during the inspection were characterised by over-direction from the teachers with limited opportunities for the children to be involved purposefully in well-planned and appropriately challenging learning activities. In order to meet the wide range of ages and abilities within the composite classes, the teachers need to plan for challenge and consistent progression in all aspects of the children's learning. In particular, the children require better opportunities throughout the classes to develop their language and oral communication skills, numeracy skills and self-management skills. The staff have identified appropriately the need to review the assessment for learning policy to ensure that children are given regular feedback to help them improve the quality of their work. It will be important that the teachers avail of continuing professional development to support them in expanding and developing the range of learning and teaching strategies.
- The provision for special educational needs is a strength of the school. The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified early and benefit from effective intervention strategies including small group and individual withdrawal support for literacy, numeracy and reading. The school links well with a range of external agencies to meet the varying needs of the children. The school has acknowledged appropriately the need to review the individual education plans and identify the specific targets and strategies to enable the class teacher to provide more focused in-class support. The teachers communicate effectively to parents the children's progress through, for example, the home-school journal.
- The guidance and planning for the development of numeracy across the school is under-developed. The teachers need to create a numeracy-rich learning environment for the children and ensure that they employ effectively a wide range of practical materials and experiences in order to develop the children's numeracy skills. The children should be given regular opportunities to work together at practical problem-solving and investigative activities.
- The children's ideas and opinions about whole-school issues are valued; they are provided with opportunities to take part in making decisions about aspects of school life that affect them through the school council and their recent engagement in reviewing the school's mission statement. They enjoy and benefit from the opportunities to participate in a wide-ranging extra-curricular programme. The use of a whole-school reward scheme places an appropriate emphasis on promoting positive behaviour and dispositions.

7. Leadership and management

- The school's processes for self-evaluation leading to improvement are at an early stage of development. The newly appointed principal provides strategic leadership and has a clear and realistic vision for the future development of the school. She has undertaken an extensive audit of the provision within the school, has actively sought the opinion of parents and has identified appropriately the need to: raise the standards in reading comprehension; develop effective practice in the learning and teaching of mental mathematics strategies; and make more effective use of data to track the children's progress in relation to their potential. The recently developed school motto 'Learning today for a better tomorrow' exemplifies the vision of the whole school community.

- Due to a prolonged period of instability in staffing, the principal carries a significant number of co-ordinating roles. She has identified appropriately, and the inspection endorses, the need to review roles and responsibilities throughout the school, to appoint a literacy and numeracy co-ordinator and to develop a leadership team to effect improvement. The current action plans are well-constructed and the actions identified are appropriate and are focused sharply on bringing about improvement in the children's learning in literacy and numeracy; significantly, there are clear and systematic processes identified for monitoring and evaluation by the newly established leadership and management team.
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be limited confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The newly appointed board of governors should ensure that their role in school development planning and self-evaluation is developed further, including the regular and robust monitoring of action plans throughout the school year to ensure that the actions identified are carried out and effect improvement.
- 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 Department of Education. The following areas need to be addressed: the review of the e-safety and intimate care policies and the updating of the information in policies to reflect staffing changes.
- It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the children and the staff.

8. Conclusion

In almost all of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is inadequate; the areas for improvement outweigh the strengths in the provision. The inspection has identified significant areas for improvement in standards, learning and teaching and leadership and management, which need to be addressed urgently if the school is to meet effectively the needs of all of the learners.

The main areas for improvement include the need to:

- raise the low standards in literacy and numeracy attained by the children;
- develop further planning, teaching and assessment for learning in order to meet more appropriately the needs of all learners; and
- review the roles and responsibilities of all staff.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-18 month period.

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