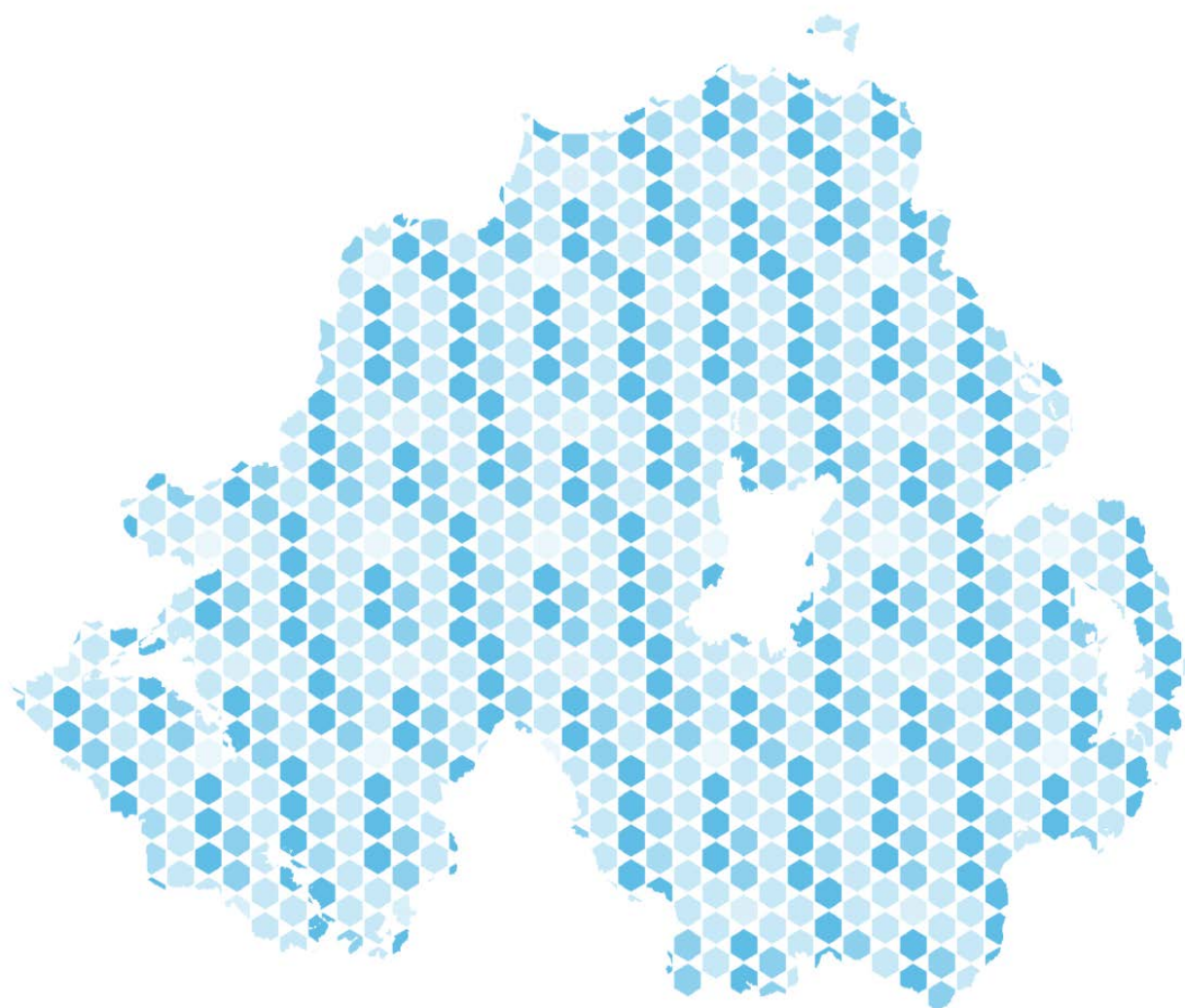


PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Mary's Primary School,
Rathfriland, Co Down

Report of an Inspection in
March 2015

eti

*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*

Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
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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.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.

Twenty-eight percent of the parents responded to the questionnaires and a small number included additional written comments. The parental responses indicated high levels of satisfaction with almost all areas of the life and work of the school. In particular, they highlighted the very caring and dedicated staff and the wide range of after-school activities provided. Almost all of the staff completed the questionnaire and their responses were very positive; they emphasised the very good working relationships among all of the staff and the focus on the well-being and development of every child. The ETI has reported to the principal and representatives of the board of governors the messages 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 literacy in the school; and
3. the quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

St Mary's Primary School is situated in the town of Rathfriland, County Down. The enrolment of the school has remained fairly stable over the past four years and currently stands at 109 children. All of the children come from within a three-mile radius and the majority of them walk to school. Approximately 28% of the children are entitled to free school meals. The school have identified 14% of the children as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

St Mary's Primary School	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	102	103	100	109
% Attendance (NI Average)	94.4	93.8	95.4	-
FSME Percentage ¹	29.4	31	25	28.4
% (No) of children on SEN register	18	16.5	18	13.7
No. of children with statements of educational needs	0	0	*	*
No. of newcomers	8	13	18	21

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall Performance Level	Outstanding
Achievements and Standards	Very good
Provision	Outstanding
Leadership and Management	Outstanding

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are highly motivated learners and engage enthusiastically in the interesting and creative learning opportunities provided by their teachers. They enjoy their learning and work very well in pairs and small groups. The children demonstrate high levels of independence and, from an early stage, can assess and comment on their own work and that of their peers.
- The school's performance data indicates that all of the children make very good progress in English and mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation.
- The children achieve very good standards in literacy. Throughout the school, the children's talking and listening skills are of a very high standard and they are very confident in engaging with adults. By year 7, the most able children read with fluency and expression and have very good levels of understanding. They discuss knowledgeably a range of authors and their reading preferences. The children write to a very good standard across a range of writing types and, as they progress through the school, they develop well the levels of sophistication in their styles of writing.
- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning make very good progress, particularly those who present with difficulties in literacy and numeracy.

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

- The children make very effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) for research, word processing, presenting information and in the use of programmable devices.

6. Provision

- The highly effective teaching is underpinned by detailed and well-differentiated planning to meet the needs of all children. The teachers make very good use of a range of creative stimuli and relevant contexts to engage the children in their learning. They employ effective questioning to develop the children's thinking and investigative skills, enable them to give extended answers, and expand further their understanding. The teachers reflect continually on the children's learning and evaluate robustly their progress to plan a programme that builds effectively on the children's prior learning. The teachers have high expectations for all children and encourage them to explore their ideas and review their choices. A key strength, across the school, is the quality of the teachers' on-going assessment of the children's progress. They make very good use of plenary sessions to enable the children to reflect on their learning and, the teachers give clear guidance on how to improve further their work through the marking process.
- The school provides very good progression in literacy and makes good use of the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) Framework for Literacy. Across the key stages, there are very good opportunities for the development of talking and listening skills through paired and small group work. The recently introduced spelling programme provides a structured approach through which the children are broadening their phonic knowledge and their vocabulary. The teachers make very effective and creative use of ICT as a stimulus for learning. The children are given opportunities to employ their writing skills across other areas of learning, particularly within the World Around Us topics. The teachers place a high priority on fostering a love of reading with a range of events including, most recently, a visit from a local author.
- The special educational needs provision is highly effective. Individual education plans provide specific targets and outline an appropriate range of strategies to guide the teachers on how to meet the children's needs. The children's progress on their targets is monitored continually and evidence of their progress and achievement is collated. The classroom assistants are deployed well to develop the children's learning and provide additional support programmes for physical and literacy needs. The withdrawal sessions for literacy and numeracy are of a high quality and support effectively the children's work in class through regular formalised liaison with the class teachers.
- The pastoral care provision is of an exceptionally high quality. There is a very inclusive ethos with high levels of mutual respect and all members of the school community are valued. The children increase in self-confidence, independence and maturity and have opportunities to hold positions of responsibility as they progress through the school, in particular the school council and the Eco-team. The promotion of positive behaviour is very effective; the children's personal and academic achievements are recognised and rewarded regularly by all members of staff.

- The school gives outstanding attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity thereby encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The senior leadership provide a clear, shared vision combined with an effective strategic direction for continued improvement in the school and there is a collegial sense of unity and trust among the staff. The co-ordinators provide outstanding leadership and support in developing their areas of responsibility. They use robust methods for monitoring and evaluating, including the effective use of data, in order to ensure continued improvements in the provision and in the standards achieved by the children.
- The school development planning process is highly effective and the governors, parents, children and staff contribute well to the identification of priorities. The action plans for the key areas of learning identify appropriate priorities and the progress is monitored regularly by both co-ordinators and the senior leadership. The teachers' engagement in recent continued professional development training has been well managed and has impacted significantly on the quality of learning and teaching across the school.
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, ETI's evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are well informed about all aspects of school life with regular updates provided by the co-ordinators. The established governors provide appropriate support and challenge to the leadership and all governors are highly committed to ensuring that the school continues to improve.
- 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.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The school has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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