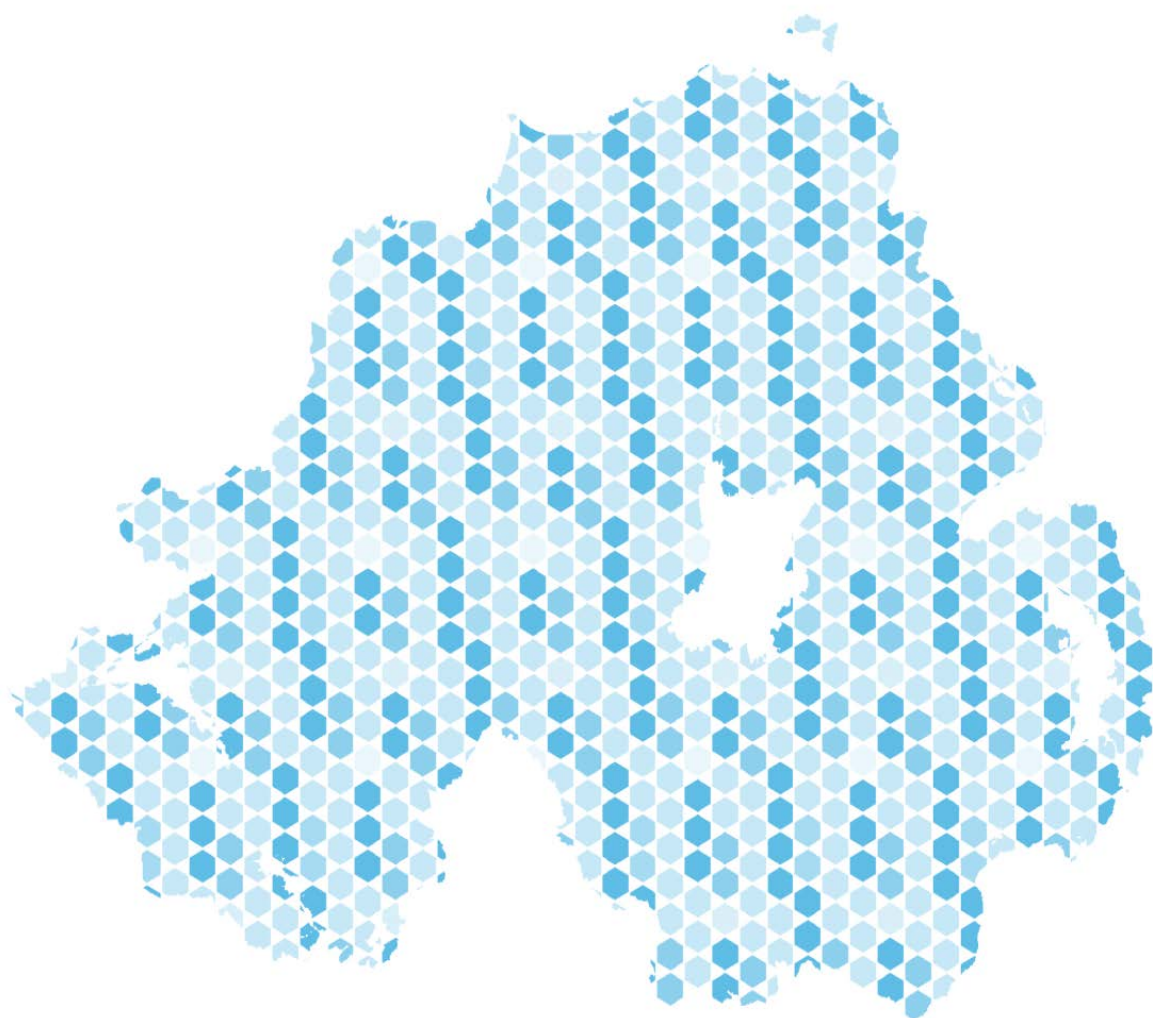


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Mary's Primary School,
Rathlin Island

Report of an inspection
in October 2013



*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>.

The inspection team observed teaching and learning, scrutinised documentation and the children's written work and held formal and informal discussions with children, principal 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	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	*	*	*	*
Principal	0	0	0	0
Support staff	0	0	0	0

* fewer than 5

The ETI is trialling a range of methods for collecting the views of parents/carers about the life and work of the school. As a result, the response rate to the parent/carer questionnaires may be low.

2. Context

St Mary's Primary School serves the children living on Rathlin Island, seven miles from the Antrim coast. The enrolment has risen slightly to eight children in the current school year. The school has three members of staff, the principal who was appointed in September 2012 and two part-time classroom assistants. The children are taught in a one room classroom which has been recently refurbished and decorated to a high standard.

St Mary's Primary School	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Enrolment	7	7	8	8
% Attendance (NI Average)	98	95	95	-
FSME Percentage ¹	0	0	0	*
% (No) of children on SEN register	0	0	0	0
No. of children with statements of educational needs	0	0	0	0
No. of newcomers	0	0	0	0

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

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

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 findings

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

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children respond very well to the high expectations of the principal, working attentively in pairs, small groups and individually. They are able to work independently from a young age, following the routines of the day, accessing resources and organising their own learning. The children are well motivated and able to transfer their skills and learning to other contexts, drawing from previous learning to enhance the outcomes of their work.
- An analysis of the school's internal performance data and evidence gathered from lesson observations, discussions with the children and scrutiny of their work indicates that all of the children achieve very good levels in mathematics and English, particularly in reading skills.
- The children attain very good standards in information and communication technology. They use competently programmable devices and a wide range of hardware and software to support their learning.

6. Provision for learning

- The principal has created a bright and attractive educational environment that stimulates interest, enables learning and celebrates very well the children's achievements.

- The principal's short and medium-term planning identifies clearly the intended learning and differentiated activities with detailed observations and evaluations which inform future planning and learning. The classroom assistants contribute proficiently to the daily planning and assessment of the children's learning. The principal promotes the children's capabilities by using skilful questioning to ensure good levels of understanding by the children of their learning. There is a very good quality of interaction between the children and staff, with frequent and effective feedback to the children on their work through discussion and clear, regular and consistent marking for improvement.
- The quality of the teaching is very good; the children are provided with a broad and balanced curriculum which reflects very well their interests, life on the island and the wider world. There is extensive and systematic individual support for each child with a very good balance of written, oral and practical activities. The lessons have a clear structure and good opportunities are provided for the children to improve their self-management skills and work out independently how they approach their tasks. The children respond very well to the pace, level and co-ordinated teaching strategies used by the principal and classroom assistants.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is very good. The whole school community is highly committed to the holistic development of the children. The children take pride in their achievements and are polite and helpful to visitors. The behaviour of the children is exemplary; they are thoughtful, co-operative and supportive of each other. The ethos of the school ensures that all of the children have time to express their opinions and preferences and are listened to by the staff.
- The school gives very good attention to healthy eating and physical activity including the staff and children dining together each day. There are regular physical education lessons, including dance lessons, and the children benefit from a range of outdoor experiences including nature trails, farm visits and environmental study activities on the island's beaches.

7. Leadership and management

- The principal has a clear and realistic vision for the school, providing very good leadership alongside significant teaching responsibilities. She sets high standards for all aspects of the school provision and encourages involvement in the school activities by all stakeholders. The school development planning and action planning processes clearly identify the provision for the children's learning as central; there is a significant amount of development work being undertaken and there are appropriate plans for the actions to be made more specific to the needs of the children and the further developments of the school.
- The principal has introduced an effective process for tracking the achievement of individual children towards more detailed analysis and evaluation of their ability and progress. It is important that the resulting data is used by the staff to inform whole school as well as individual children's planning, and to identify further areas for school improvement.

- There are regular opportunities for the parents to meet with the principal to discuss their child's education and to participate in school events, including annual school shows. Very good partnerships have been forged with the local community, in particular the senior citizens on the island. The staff and children benefit from the effective links established with schools on the mainland and from a broad range of educational visits, including Belfast Zoo, the Navan Centre and the Millennium Forum.
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of the inspection, the inspection team's evaluation is that the parents, staff and school community can have a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are effectively involved in the recent changes to the school, the financial management and the use of resources to enhance the quality of the learning environment.
- 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. During the inspection, the inspection team met with a group of children from KS1 and KS2. They spoke with enthusiasm and confidence about their experiences in school. The children reported that they felt happy and safe in school and know what to do if they have any worries or concerns.
- 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 the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school 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.

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