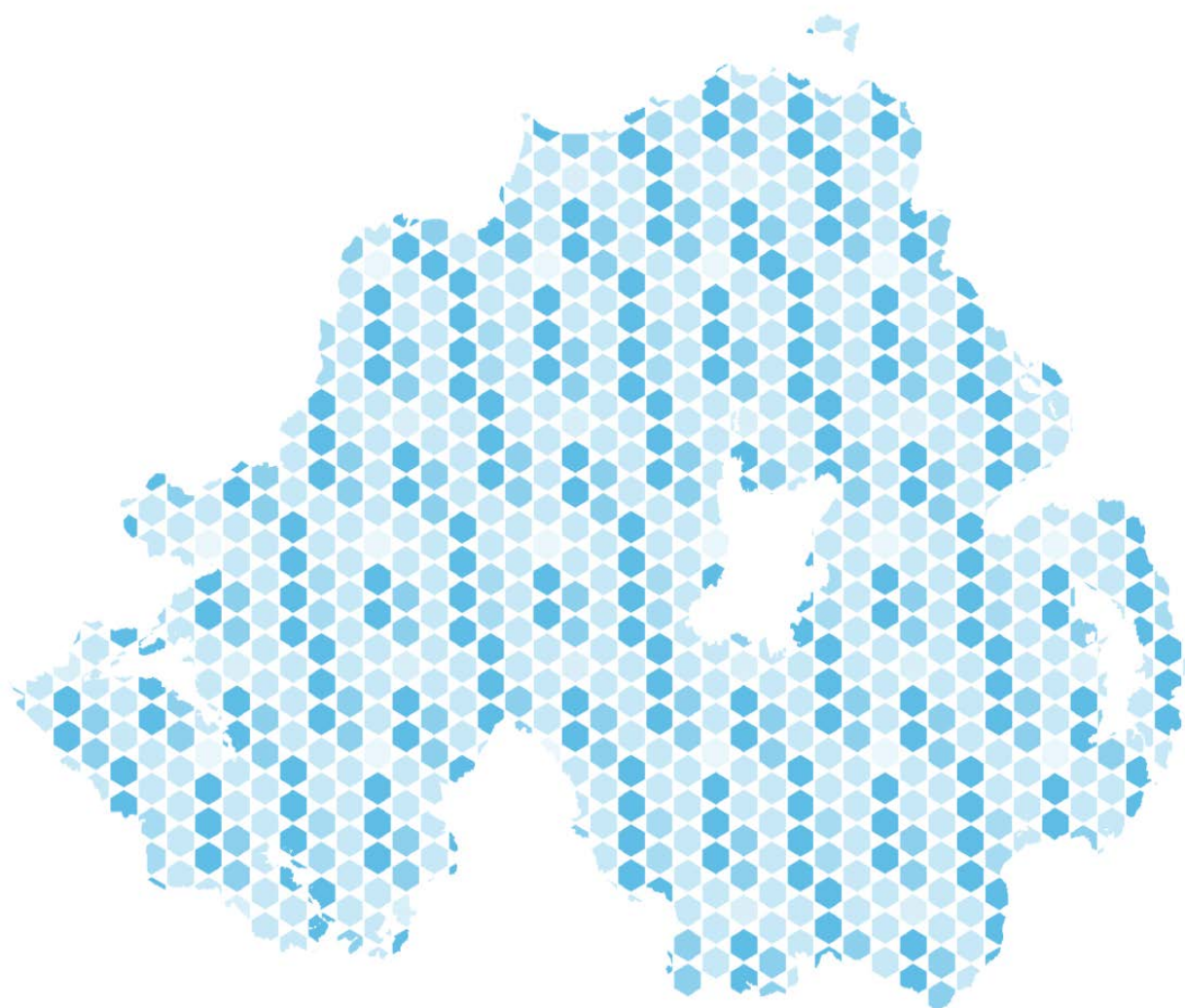


# PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Mary's Primary School,  
Stewartstown, Co Tyrone

Report of an Inspection in  
February 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 from the governors;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Ten percent of parents and all of the staff (teaching and non-teaching) responded to the questionnaires. In their responses, the parents indicated high levels of satisfaction with most areas of the life and work of the school. In particular, they highlighted their appreciation of the respect and care which the staff have for the children and the range of after-school activities. The staff responses were highly positive and emphasised the clear focus on the care for each child as an individual. ETI has reported to the principal and a representative of the board of governors 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 in the school; and
3. the quality of leadership and management.

## **3. Context**

St Mary's Primary School is situated in the village of Stewartstown in County Tyrone. The enrolment has decreased over the past four years and currently stands at 108. Most of the children come from the village and the surrounding rural area and a small number travel by school bus. At the time of the inspection, 53% of the children were entitled to free school meals. The school has identified approximately 7% 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	128	120	114	108
% Attendance (NI Average)	96	95.6	95.9	96.6
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	51 (65)	53 (64)	56 (63)	53 (59)
% (No) of children on SEN register	21 (27)	18 (21)	13 (14)	7 (8)
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

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

#### 5. Achievements and standards

- The children are very well behaved, enthusiastic and motivated to learn. They collaborate well in pairs and small groups, are respectful of, and listen well to, the ideas and opinions of others. The children are confident and, from a very early stage, they develop well their independence and their self-management skills. The children can reflect critically on their learning and identify areas for improvement.
- The school's performance data shows that, in English all of the children and in mathematics almost all of the children make very good progress in line with their ability or above expectation.
- The children engage confidently with the adults and their peers and have very good talking and listening skills. By year 7, the most able children read to a very good standard with fluency and expression and they can discuss a range of reading preferences with enthusiasm. In most classes, the children write to a good standard across a range of forms and employ effective strategies to access words, including dictionaries and thesauri, alongside their phonics knowledge.
- Throughout the school, the children talk enthusiastically about their learning in numeracy and show understanding of important mathematical ideas and concepts, using appropriate mathematical language. The children transfer their mathematical skills and knowledge to other areas of the curriculum and, from an early age, demonstrate flexibility in their thinking and use of mental mathematics strategies.

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

- The children who require support with aspects of their learning make very good progress in line with their ability and participate in all aspects of school life.
- The children use information and communication technology (ICT) competently in a variety of settings, including researching information; designing and delivering presentations; word processing and drafting; and handling and presenting data. They use well a range of ICT software programmes which support and enhance their learning in literacy and numeracy.

## **6. Provision**

- The whole-school programmes for literacy and numeracy outline progression in the children's learning and enable the teachers to plan for a balanced coverage of the English and mathematics curriculum using a consistent format across year groups. The staff evaluate their planning regularly with a clear focus on the children's learning. In the best practice, clear differentiation is evident for groups and individuals in response to the evaluations of the children's learning; this good practice should be shared across all classes. The teachers mark the children's work regularly and value the children's efforts; in the most effective practice, clear guidance is given to the children on how to improve their work. The children are fully involved in setting and achieving personal learning targets.
- Almost all of the lessons observed were effective in promoting and progressing the children's learning. The teachers make effective use of a wide and interesting range of resources, including ICT and the attractive outdoor environment, to support and enhance the children's learning. A key strength is the use of interesting real-life contexts and the exploitation of incidental opportunities for the children to apply and develop their literacy and numeracy skills. The teacher's need to make more effective use of the World Around Us topics to provide further opportunities for the children to transfer their literacy and numeracy skills to another context.
- The teachers reinforce mathematical language and encourage the children to explain and discuss their strategies and thinking through regular problem-solving and investigative activities. The use of a computerised reading programme encourages the children to read widely and for pleasure, and to take responsibility for their progress in reading. Novels are used effectively in key stage (KS) 2 to develop the children's writing skills alongside their reading and comprehension skills. The classroom assistants provide very effective learning support in class and also through the additional reading support sessions which benefit the children's reading confidence and enjoyment.
- The quality of the provision for special educational needs is a key strength. The children benefit from high quality, well-targeted withdrawal sessions and from a wide range of carefully tailored programmes which support their learning in literacy and numeracy and develop well their confidence and self-esteem. The individual education plans are regularly reviewed and updated.

- The children develop confidence, independence and a sense of their own worth through the many opportunities to take on roles and responsibilities and play a meaningful role in school improvement. The school council provides the children with an opportunity to express their views and opinions about the school. Through the 'Welcoming Schools' project the children were instrumental in bringing about improvements to the lunchtime arrangements in the school dining room. The ethos is child-centred and welcoming; the working relationships at all levels are excellent.
- 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 school leadership provides a strategic approach to school improvement which is child-centred and focused clearly on improving learning and teaching to raise further the standards achieved by all of the children. The staff work well in curricular teams in developing a collegiate approach to school improvement.
- The agreed and coherent systems for the monitoring and evaluation of the provision for literacy and numeracy include the effective analysis of data and the scrutiny of planning and the children's work. The school development plan is well conceived and based on wide consultation. The associated literacy and numeracy action plans are focused clearly on improving further the learning experiences provided for the children and the standards they achieve.
- The extensive links with the local and wider community, including cross-community partnerships and international links developed through Comenius, broaden the learning experiences for the children both within and beyond the classroom, and support the professional development of staff. The parents are kept well informed about the life and work of the school through the up-to-date school website and regular newsletters. Parental programmes enable the parents to engage with their child in school and provide practical support in class and at home. The school sports hall is used extensively by the local community for sports and recreational programmes.
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are highly supportive and also provide challenge to the principal and the staff in taking forward the agreed priorities within the school development plan.
- 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 children spoke enthusiastically about their learning and the many after-school activities they enjoy. They reported that they feel safe and secure in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their well-being.

- 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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