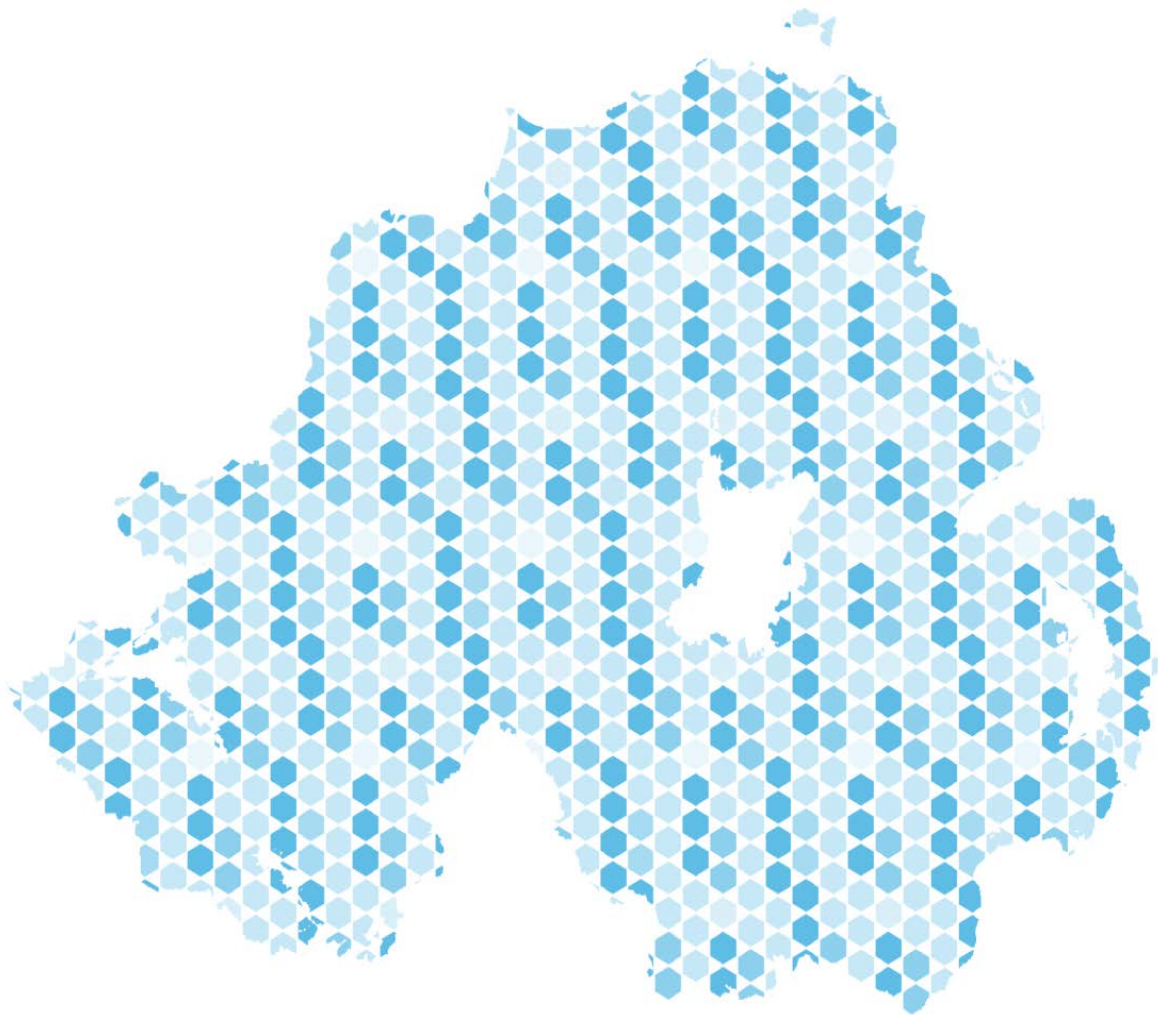


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Patrick's and St Brigid's
Primary School and Nursery
Unit, Ballycastle, Co Antrim

Report of an Inspection in
March 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
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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.

Questionnaire	Number	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	242	27	11%	8
Teaching staff	16	11	69%	*
Support staff	21	*	19%	*

* fewer than 5

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.

The responses to the parental questionnaires indicated high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted the very friendly environment and their appreciation of the work of the teachers in meeting the needs of individual children. The very small number of issues raised was discussed with the principal and governors. A majority of the teachers and a minority of the support staff completed questionnaires and their responses were very positive. In discussions with the governors, they emphasised the importance of the school as the focal point of the parish community and their focus on supporting the school's work on behalf of all of the children.

2. Context

St Patrick's and St Brigid's Primary School and Nursery Unit is situated in the town of Ballycastle, County Antrim. Most of the children attending the school come from the town and surrounding rural area. The enrolment has decreased slightly over the last four years and currently stands at 351 children. At the time of the inspection, approximately 33% of the children were entitled to free school meals and around 21% of the children had been identified by the school as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

St. Patrick's and St. Brigid's Primary School	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Enrolment	307	311	301	301
% Attendance	95	95	94	95
FSME Percentage ¹	21	23	27	33
% of children on SEN register	13	17	12	21
No. of children with statements of educational needs	12	13	10	7
No. of newcomers	11	9	14	18

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 nursery unit; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

4. Overall finding

Overall Performance Level	Very Good
Achievements and Standards	Very Good
Provision	Very Good
Leadership and Management	Outstanding
Nursery Unit	Very Good

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- From the nursery unit through each of the key stages, the children respond positively and with enthusiasm to the well-planned learning opportunities provided by their teachers. They work very well with one another and, as they progress through the school, they apply their learning in a range of meaningful contexts. Increasingly, the children reflect upon their learning and suggest ways in which they can improve the quality of their work. Their behaviour is outstanding, and the children spoken to during the inspection were evidently very proud of their school.

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

- An analysis of the end of key stage (KS) 2 performance data² in three of the past four years shows that in English the school's performance is in line with or well above the Northern Ireland (NI) average. In mathematics, over the corresponding period, the school's performance is in line with or above the Northern Ireland (NI) average in two out of the three years. Compared with schools in the same free school meals category, the performance in English is in line with the average in two of the years and well above in the other year. In mathematics, the performance is in line with or above the average in two of the three years³. The school's 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 good progress in mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation.
- The children achieve very good standards in literacy. The teachers develop successfully the children's comprehension and thinking skills. The children are articulate, reflective and demonstrate high levels of confidence in their interactions with adults and their peers. The teachers use skilfully Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to promote the development of the children's reading skills and reading for enjoyment. By the end of year 7, the children's writing skills are very well developed; they use a variety of forms to a very good standard.
- The children respond enthusiastically to the wide range of mathematical activities; they make good progress and demonstrate a thorough understanding of the key concepts across the mathematics curriculum. By the end of key stage (KS) 2, the most able children apply a range of strategies to solve problems; they explain well their thinking using appropriate mathematics vocabulary.
- The children in the nursery unit are well behaved and most spend lengthy periods engaging well in productive play. Most of the children show very good levels of confidence and independence in their work and play. They co-operate well with the staff and their peers and organise and manage important aspects of their daily routines and personal care. Overall, most of the children are making very good progress in all areas of the pre-school curriculum; a significant minority demonstrate good early writing and numeracy skills.
- The children have well-planned opportunities to use an increasing range of digital media to help them in their learning. The school's internal records of achievement in ICT indicate that, by the end of KS2, the children have developed a good range of skills which prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

6. Provision

- The teachers have recently agreed to change the format of their planning to facilitate further integration and coherence in the development of the children's thinking skills and personal capabilities. The teachers' planning for learning is comprehensive and rigorous; long-term planning shows clear progression within a balanced coverage of topics. To improve further the standards the children achieve, the short-term planning needs to be matched more effectively to the range of ability in the classes.

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.

- The teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. Almost two-thirds of the teaching was very good or outstanding. In the most effective practice observed, the teachers employed very good questioning and made skilful use of the children's responses to achieve extended answers and explanations. A particular feature of the outstanding practice was the use of real life contexts to engage, motivate and challenge the children to achieve their best. In the less effective practice, in a very small number of lessons, the activities were overly directed and there was a need to use clearer success criteria, indicating to the children the features of very good practice.
- The school employs a wide range of assessment approaches to evaluate the children's learning. The teachers use the school's performance data discerningly to inform their teaching and to set targets. Using feedback from their teachers, the children reflect on and change their targets as the year progresses. In almost all of the lessons, the teachers used questioning and oral feedback to enable the children to manage their own learning more effectively.
- Throughout the school and the nursery unit, the quality of the working relationships in support of the children's learning is outstanding. The encouragement of each child and the continuing professional development of all staff are central to the work of the school. In wider discussions, the children talked enthusiastically about their contribution to the positive changes in school through their participation in the school council, the 'eco' council, and the peer mediation activities.
- The school has extensive after-school care and extra-curricular activities to facilitate children and their parents throughout the calendar year. The children and their teachers benefit significantly from the opportunities to engage with schools in countries within the European Union and beyond. The school values and encourages the study of languages facilitated effectively by the French and Spanish clubs. These important opportunities build well upon the Primary Modern Languages Programme and the very good work of the school's Comenius language assistant.
- The children identified as having additional needs benefit from the high quality withdrawal sessions to support literacy and numeracy or they are supported very well in class by classroom assistants. The children's education plans outline appropriate targets which are based on the rigorous assessment and tracking of the children's progress.

7. Leadership and management

- The processes for self-evaluation have been informed very well by effective consultation with the children, their parents and the governors. The school development plan and the associated action plans have a clear focus on the impact of the actions that will bring about improvement in the children's learning, including systematic and effective cycles of monitoring and evaluation.
- The quality of the leadership provided by the principal is outstanding. He has worked very effectively and by innovative ways to develop important links with the parents, the local community and the schools to which the children will progress at the end of KS2. A particular feature of the work of the principal is his commitment to developing staff in their leadership roles through, for example,

school-based development programmes which draw upon the latest educational research to inform teaching styles and improve further the quality of learning and teaching. The co-ordinators are knowledgeable about their areas of responsibility and are committed to continuing improvement of the provision. As a result, and with the dedication of all of the staff working cohesively, they have overseen significant improvements in the quality of the provision and the standards the children attain.

- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the parents, staff and school community can have a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated; the governors are very well informed about the school and carry out effectively their support and challenge functions.
- 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 children in year 6 reported that they feel very 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 this school and nursery unit is very good. The school and nursery unit are meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children; and have demonstrated the capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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