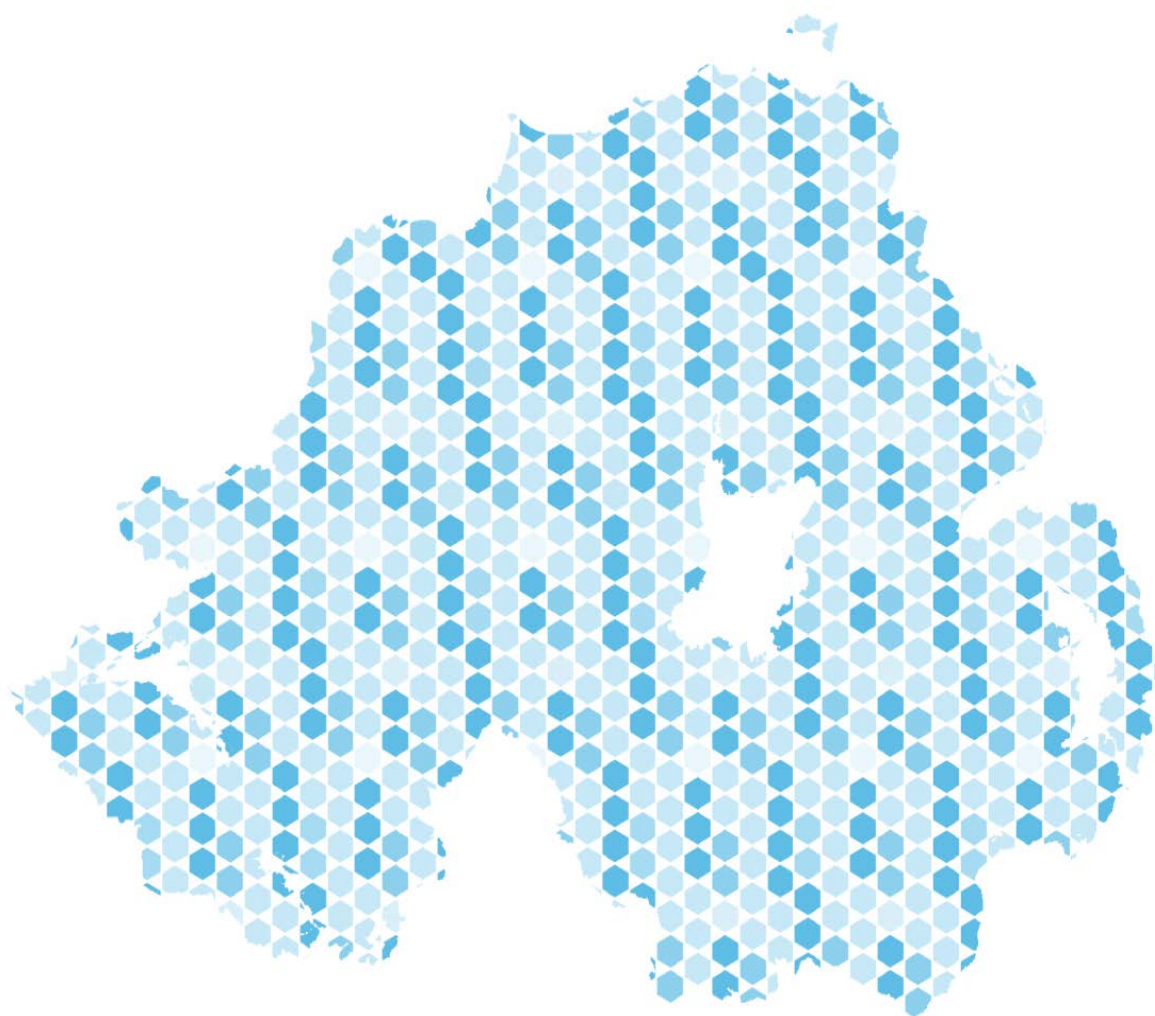


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Patrick's Primary School and
Nursery Unit, Crossmaglen,
Co Armagh

Report of an Inspection in
November 2013

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:

- 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 (total number in the school per category)	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	234	26	11%	14
Teaching staff	17	9	53%	*
Support staff	23	12	52 %	*

* fewer than 5

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) is trialling a range of methods for collecting the views of parents about the life and work of the school. As a result, the response rate to the parental questionnaire may be low.

Almost all the responses from the parent questionnaires praised the wide range of learning opportunities, the approachable and helpful staff and the value placed on the children's welfare. The staff responses were highly supportive of the life and work of the school. The matters raised in the questionnaires were discussed with the principal and the representative of the Board of Governors.

2. Context

St Patrick's Primary School and Nursery Unit is situated in close proximity to the centre of the town of Crossmaglen, County Armagh. The school promotes a Christian ethos and plays a central role in the life of the local community. The nursery unit is accommodated in a purpose-built unit within the grounds of the primary school. At the time of the inspection, the assistant teacher was absent from the nursery unit. The Irish-medium unit is located in clusters of classrooms throughout the main school building. The children who attend the nursery unit and school come from the town and surrounding area. The children who attend the Irish-medium unit come from a wider catchment area across South Armagh.

St Patrick's Primary School and Nursery Unit	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Enrolment	328	327	349	362
% Attendance (NI Average)	93.6%	94.9%	94.9%	96.1%
FSME Percentage ¹	36.2%	40%	41.2%	40%
% of children on SEN register	10.4%	15.9%	14.9%	13.2%
No. of children with statements of educational needs	10	10	6	9
No. of newcomers	10	10	13	8

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 Primary school, nursery unit and the Irish-medium unit; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

4. Overall finding

Overall Performance Level	Very Good
Achievements and Standards	Very Good
Provision for Learning	Very Good
Leadership and Management	Very Good
Irish-medium Unit	Very Good
Nursery Unit	Very Good

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are friendly and courteous and have a positive attitude to learning. Their behaviour is outstanding and they show mutual respect for each other, the staff and visitors. The children are enthusiastic and well motivated, taking responsibility for aspects of their own learning and undertaking independent activities with confidence. They co-operate well when working in pairs or small groups and contribute enthusiastically to class discussions. The children are secure in taking risks when problem solving and investigating, and are creative in their thinking, expressing clearly their opinions and reasoning.

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 data shows that in English and mathematics, the school's performance is in line with the Northern Ireland (NI) average in two out of three years. Compared with schools in the same free school meals (FSM) category, the performance in English and mathematics is in line with the average in two out of three years.* The school's internal performance data shows that almost all of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make very good progress in mathematics and that most of the children make very good progress in English, in line with their ability or above expectation. In the Irish-medium unit, the end of key stage (KS) 2 performance data shows that the unit's performance is in line with the Northern Ireland (NI) average in all of the previous three out of four years.
- By the end of KS2, the children read with fluency, expression and enjoyment and are able to discuss their favourite authors and characters from a range of classic and modern texts. The children write with flair and imagination for a range of audiences and purposes. A particular feature of the children's literacy work is their appreciation of poetry; the children are able to talk about their favourite poets and express well their thoughts and feelings when writing in this style. The *Reading Partnership* programme is well organised and almost all of the children have made progress at or above their expected level of attainment.
- The children, including those in the Irish-medium unit, are enthusiastic about mathematics and enjoy the daily mental mathematical challenges presented. In the best practice, they are enthralled and motivated by the problem solving opportunities in real life mathematical situations. The children are skilled and flexible in selecting and applying strategies to numeracy-based activities and to other areas of the curriculum requiring mathematical reasoning. Mathematical language is well modelled by the teachers and used appropriately by the children. Underachievement has been clearly identified and the *Catch-up* numeracy provided for the children is of good quality. Almost all of those children targeted for this support are working at or above their expected level.
- By the end of KS2, almost all of the children in the Irish-medium unit are achieving standards in Irish, English and mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation. The children express articulately and fluently their pride in their school and are fully engaged in the celebratory culture of the Irish-medium unit. The high profile of literacy in both languages ensures that the children develop very good skills in talking, listening, reading and writing.
- The children in the nursery unit are very well settled, independent and highly motivated in their learning. Most of the children persevere at activities for sustained periods. They are curious about their learning environment, use materials creatively and play collaboratively and with imagination. A majority of the children are fluent and confident in expressing their ideas and feelings and are interested in books and experimental writing. The minority of children who have less well-developed language and communication skills are supported appropriately by the staff and they are making good progress.

* 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.

- The children are confident in using a range of digital media including i-Pads, cameras, video-conferencing facilities and various learning platforms that can be accessed in school and at home. By the end of KS2, the children achieve very good standards in information communication technology (ICT) and use their skills across a range of contexts.

6. Provision

- The quality of the teaching ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. Almost two-thirds of the teaching was very good or outstanding and was characterised by skilful classroom management, open-ended questioning to extend the children's answers and appropriate differentiated activities to meet fully the needs of all the children, including challenge for the more able children. The staff in the foundation stage (FS) and in the nursery unit need to work together to improve the level of progression and challenge in the indoor and outdoor play based learning provision. The teachers mark the children's work regularly and value the children's efforts; in the best practice, clear guidance is given to the children about how to improve their work. The children are fully involved in setting and achieving personal learning goals. The teachers are guided by curriculum overviews which ensure continuity and progression in the children's learning. The classroom assistants provide very effective support for the teachers and the children and demonstrate a high level of expertise and knowledge in their daily responsibilities.
- The literacy programme is well integrated into all aspects of the curriculum and the children have opportunities to develop their reading, writing and talking and listening in meaningful contexts. The children are provided with regular opportunities to present their work using a range of traditional and multimedia techniques, and from an early stage show a developing awareness of audience. The school actively encourages the children's participation in drama in both school productions and regionally organised events. The school library has been refurbished and regular class visits to the town library fosters the children's interest in and enjoyment of reading and books.
- The school provides a broad programme of mathematics and the teachers have placed appropriate emphasis on the integration of practical approaches and investigations related to real life context. The use of digital media, including the use of interactive whiteboards and i-Pads, stimulates the children's interest and builds the children's confidence in taking risks with their learning. The local bank has worked with the senior children to develop their understanding of financial capability.
- The school has made a very significant investment in staffing, resources and professional development to enhance learning and teaching for those children requiring additional support with their learning. The teachers use a wide range of appropriate intervention strategies including very effective withdrawal sessions that develop the children's learning. Various on-line programmes are used well to motivate the children and extend their learning. There is very good liaison with multi-disciplinary agencies including speech and language and occupational therapists which supports the children's learning and informs and develops further the skill of the staff.

- The learning and teaching within the Irish-medium unit is characterised by outstanding working relationships and well-structured and resourced lessons. The focus on the development of bi-literacy has very positive effects on literacy standards across the curriculum and extends the children's thinking skills and increases their confidence. The mathematical experiences provided are well planned, integrated across the curriculum and ensure high levels of attainment by the end of KS2. The wide range of extra-curricular activities and competitions available to the Irish-medium unit children, in both languages, enhances and enriches their learning experience. Information and communication technology (ICT) is appropriately used throughout the Irish-medium unit.
- The nursery coordinator works closely with the whole staff team to plan a broad and balanced programme which provides very good or outstanding opportunities for learning in almost all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The assessment methods being used are very effective in identifying actions for specific children, including those identified with additional learning needs, and are well linked to the planning to ensure these children make suitable progress. The staff, who have a very good understanding of the pre-school curriculum, interact very skilfully with the children during their play and group sessions to promote their thinking, language and learning. They now need to ensure that all of the staff throughout the play sessions model the development of mathematical language and ideas more consistently.
- The quality of the pastoral care in the primary school, nursery unit and the Irish-medium unit is outstanding. Every member of the whole school community is valued in a very inclusive and caring ethos. The children respond well to taking on roles and responsibilities through, for example, the school council and eco-council. They participate in a wide range of trips, visits and extra-curricular activities including music, sport and drama which also enhances their learning experiences and personal development. A particular strength of the pastoral care is the comprehensive Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) programme which includes the very good work being done to foster effectively both the children's own sense of identity and culture while also learning to respect and value other cultures at both local and international levels. This work has been developed through their well-established involvement in the *Dissolving Boundaries*, *Primary Curriculum Partnership Programme* and the *Comenius* projects. The year six children who were interviewed reported their interest in a wide range of lessons including mathematics, reading and topic work linked to school trips. They also appreciated the after-school activities and talked knowledgeably about the work of the school council. They report that they are happy and safe in school and know who to turn to if they have a concern.
- The school and nursery unit gives outstanding attention to healthy eating and physical activity. Healthy snacks are available for the children and there are a range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities for energetic play and team games. The school has achieved the Green Eco-School flag.

7. Leadership and management

- The principal has been in post for just over three years and has successfully reorganised the management structure with the formation of a senior leadership team and establishment of core curriculum teams. The principal is ably supported by the work of the vice-principal and the curriculum team leaders who are knowledgeable about their core areas and are committed to further improving

the standards in the school. The principal and staff have a shared vision for the school and there is a strong sense of collegiatelity in daily work activities and in the school improvement process. The school actively encourages and supports continued professional development for all staff leading to improved standards for the children.

- The school development planning process is well informed by a thorough analysis of internal performance data and includes regular and effective consultation with the children, their parents and the staff. The school and the nursery unit have identified appropriate areas for development, including the need to provide more measureable targets within the action plans and develop more rigorous and formal procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. The nursery unit and Irish-medium unit are integral to the school and both units are well supported and managed by senior leadership.
- The school has developed useful links and partnerships to enhance the children's learning through, for example, the *Inside Out*, employability and transitions projects. These projects utilise well the skills of other professionals within the community to help the children learn about a range of topics, such as, working relationships, careers and moving to the next stage of their education. The school has provided good opportunities for parents to support their children in their learning through their participation in workshops in core curriculum areas.
- 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 actively involved in the work of the school and the range of expertise across the governors is used to provide a challenge function in relation to finance, curriculum, and standards and achievements in the nursery unit, Irish-medium unit and the school.
- 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 very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the learners; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

Health and Safety/Accommodation

- There is a lack of suitable accommodation in terms of ancillary rooms regarding Special Educational Needs (SEN) and First Aid.
- The adult toilet facilities are inadequate for the number of staff.

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