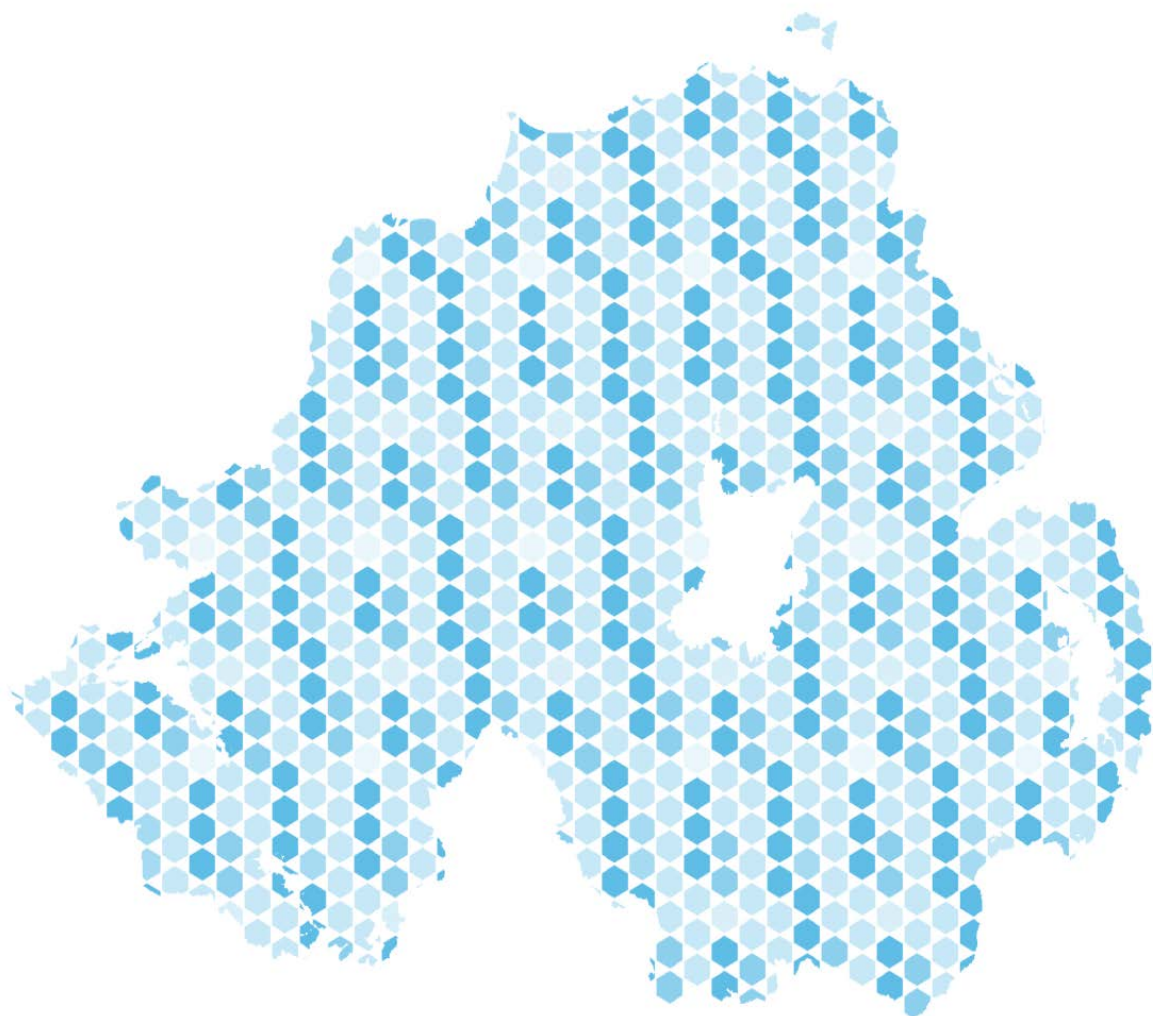


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Columba's Primary School,  
Ballerin, Garvagh

Report of an Inspection  
in January 2013

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%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

## SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Columba's Primary School is situated in the townland of Ballerin, approximately three miles north west of Garvagh. Almost all of the children attend from the surrounding rural area. Seven reception age children are enrolled in the year one class. Overall, the enrolment has decreased slightly in recent years.

Approximately 19% of the children are entitled to free school meals. The school has identified approximately 19% of the children as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

This inspection completes the work that began in May 2012. The inspection was incomplete at that stage due to industrial action being taken by the staff not to co-operate with the Education and Training Inspectorate on advice from their teaching union.

## FOCUS

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy;
- the quality of provision for learning; and
- the quality of leadership and management including the school's processes for self-evaluation leading to improvement.

## OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

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.

## KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

### Achievements and Standards

**The quality of the children's achievements and standards is very good.**

- In English and mathematics, almost all of the children attain **standards** which are very good and in line with their ability. In all classes, almost all of the children speak articulately and listen intently in group and class discussions with their peers and adults. They read fluently and expressively and write well for a wide range of interesting and meaningful purposes. Most of the children also show very good flexibility and independence in their work in mathematics and other problem-based activities; they are able to draw upon and explain and justify their use of a wide range of strategies. Overall, the children take very good levels of responsibility for all aspects of their learning.
- The children identified with **special educational needs** (SEN) also make very good progress in line with their abilities and are able to apply their growing literacy and numeracy skills with increasing confidence.

- By the end of key stage two, all of the children achieve high standards in **information and communication technology**; they are competent in using their skills across a good range of learning activities.

### **Provision for Learning**

**The quality of the provision for learning is very good.**

- The **children** come into school with a clear disposition to learn. They are confident and well-mannered and almost all settle quickly to their work in class. The reception children interact confidently with the adults and other children and they respond positively to all aspects of their planned programme; overall, the provision for their learning is good.
- During the inspection, the quality of the **teaching** observed was always good or better and most of the teaching was very good or outstanding. There were good levels of challenge and high expectations set for all of the children; the teachers gave the children choices; they encouraged the children to try out their suggestions to extend their thinking and they infused a good variety of peer and self-evaluation strategies at appropriate points in the lessons. It is timely that the teachers are improving some aspects of the **planning** currently; the inspection findings endorse this important work.
- The provision for **special educational needs** is outstanding. The wide range of additional support provided matches the children's needs well and has a very positive impact on the progress they make in their learning and in building their self-esteem.
- The quality of the arrangements for **pastoral care** in the school is outstanding. There is a caring and child-centred ethos that builds effectively the children's confidence as individuals and as valued and responsible members of the whole-school and local community.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting **healthy eating and physical activity**, for example, through the provision of healthy breaks and a varied range of regular physical and extra-curricular activities.

### **Leadership and Management**

**The quality of the leadership and management is outstanding.**

- The teaching **Principal** provides excellent leadership and management. She has a clear vision for the school, leads by example, combines effectively her teaching and leadership responsibilities and promotes a collegiate approach to decision-making. She is ably supported by the hard-working staff team who are committed to the continuous improvement of the school's overall provision.

- The whole-school **self-evaluation and school development planning** processes are outstanding. The school development plan and associated action plans identify a relevant range of areas for whole-school development. There is a well-embedded culture of reflection and self-evaluation which is focused sharply on raising further the children's standards and achievements.
- 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 child protection guidance issued by the relevant department.
- The **Board of Governors** is supportive and active in key aspects of the life and work of the school. 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.

## 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.

## BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School:** St Columba's Primary iii. **Date of Inspection:** W/B 21/01/2013  
 ii. **School Reference Number:** 303-2202 iv. **Nature of Inspection:** Short

B.

School Year	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Year 1 Intake	13	11	15	14	15
<b>Enrolments</b>					
Primary	102	96	95	92	95
Reception	2	2	4	2	7
Nursery Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Special Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Irish Medium Unit	0	0	0	0	0

The enrolment for the current year is the figure on the day of notification of inspection.  
 For previous years it is the figure in the annual return to the Department of Education.

The calculations at C and D should be based on the total of the primary and reception enrolments only.

- C. Average Attendance for the Previous School Year  
 (expressed as a percentage): 96.1% **NI Avg Att: 94.7%**
- Average Attendance for those children on the  
 Special Educational Needs Register: 95.1%
- |   | Primary &<br>Reception   | Nursery<br>Unit              | Special<br>Unit     | Irish Medium<br>Unit |
|---|--------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| D. i. Number of Teachers<br>(including the principal and part-time teachers):<br>(Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)   | 5.96                     | 0                            | 0                   | 0                    |
| ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio):  | 19                       | NI PTR: 20.2                 |                     |                      |
| iii. Average Class Size:  | 13.57                    |                              |                     |                      |
| iv. Class Size (Range):   | 13 to 25                 |                              |                     |                      |
| v. Ancillary Support:<br>Number of Hours <b>Per Week</b> :  |                          |                              |                     |                      |
| i. Clerical support:  |                          |                              | 10                  |                      |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom<br>Assistant Support:  |                          |                              | 20                  |                      |
| iii. Additional hours of other<br>classroom assistant support:  |                          |                              | 35                  |                      |
| vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs:  |                          |                              | 2.1%                |                      |
| vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register:  |                          |                              | 18.95%              |                      |
| viii. Number of children who are <b>not</b> of statutory school age:  |                          |                              | 7                   |                      |
| ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals:   |                          |                              | 18.95%              |                      |
| x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2010/11<br>who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics,<br>and Irish (in Irish-medium schools): | <b>English</b><br>93.33% | <b>Mathematics</b><br>86.67% | <b>Irish</b><br>N/A |                      |
| xi. If there is a composite class with reception children in it,<br>please indicate the numbers of children in the other<br>year groups:                              | <b>Year 1</b><br>15      | <b>Year 2</b><br>0           | <b>Year 3</b><br>0  |                      |

### THE VIEWS OF THE PARENTS, TEACHERS, SUPPORT STAFF AND CHILDREN

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents and the staff to complete confidential questionnaires prior to the inspection, as well as a meeting with the year 6 and 7 children and representatives of the Board of Governors.

Sixty four questionnaires were issued to the parents of the children in the primary school; 29 (45%) were returned to Inspection Services Branch and 13 contained additional written comments.

Almost all of the teachers and support staff completed the online questionnaire and a small number included written comments.

All of the responses from the questionnaires returned were highly positive and the written comments paid tribute to the quality of the school's pastoral and caring ethos and the focus placed by the school on providing a wide range of learning experiences for the children.

The year 6 and 7 children reported that they feel very happy and secure in school and know what to do if they have any worries or concerns about their safety and well-being.

The Inspectorate has reported to the Principal, and representatives of the governors, the responses from the questionnaires.

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