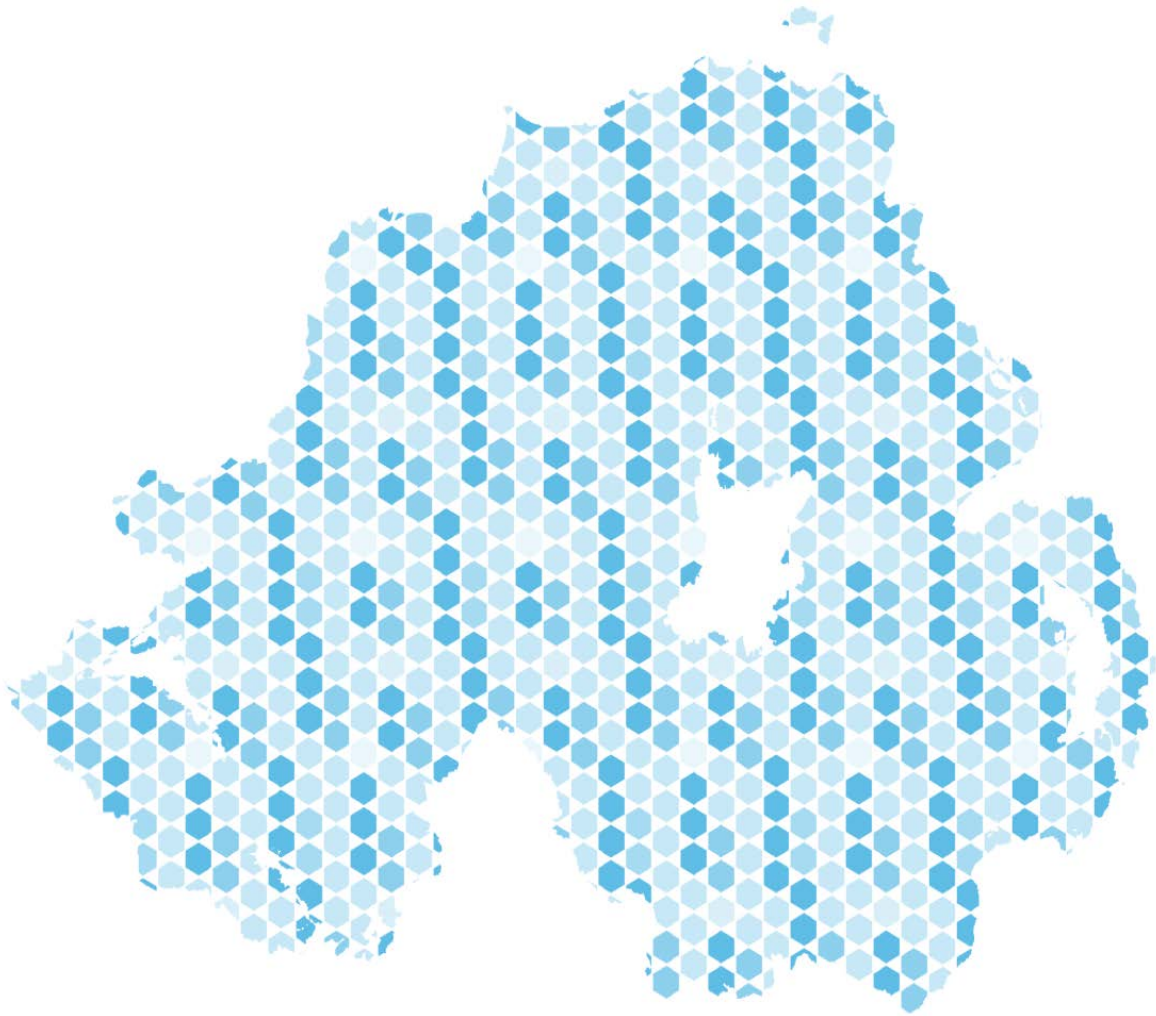


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Mary's Primary School,
Newcastle, County Down

Maintained, co-educational

Report of an Inspection (Involving
Action Short of Strike) in
June 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



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INTRODUCTION

1. Context

St Mary's Primary School and Nursery Unit is situated in Newcastle. Almost all of the children who attend the school come from the town and the surrounding area. The current school building was opened in 2012 and includes a nursery unit with two part-time sessions. There has been a substantial growth in enrolment in the past four years and the school is regularly over-subscribed; consequently, the school has insufficient accommodation. The principal has been in post for four years. The school received the Digital School of Distinction Award in September 2016 and holds a green flag from the Eco-Schools programme.

Four of the teaching unions which make up the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) have declared industrial action primarily in relation to a pay dispute. This includes non co-operation with the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). Prior to the inspection, the school informed the ETI that almost all of the teachers would not be co-operating with the inspectors. The ETI has a statutory duty to monitor, inspect and report on the quality of education under Article 102 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. Therefore, the inspection proceeded and the following evaluations are based on the evidence as made available at the time of the inspection.

St Mary's Primary School and Nursery Unit	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Enrolment	301	321	335	362
% School attendance	94.6	94.5	95.1	N/A
% NI Primary school average	95.6	95.4	95.5	N/A
FSME Percentage ¹	37.9	41.7	41.2	41.2
No. of children on SEN register	85	84	95	99
% of children on SEN register	28	26	28	26
No. of children with statements of educational need	11	15	16	16
No. of newcomer children	6	7	8	9

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

N/A not available

2. Views of parents and staff

Twelve percent of parents and sixty-four percent of staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. Almost all of the parental responses indicated very high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of school life. The written comments were wholly positive about the leadership of the principal and the commitment of the staff to the children's well-being and academic progress. In particular, parents welcomed the greater levels of engagement with the school and the recent introduction of 'wrap around care.' The staff responses highlighted their appreciation of the support of the principal and of the mutual respect shown at all levels.

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

3. Focus of the inspection

The ETI was unable to evaluate:

- the outcomes for children with a particular focus on numeracy and literacy including across the curriculum and how the school is addressing low attainment and underachievement where applicable;
- quality of provision with a particular focus on numeracy and literacy including across the curriculum and the nursery unit; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Unable to assure of the quality of education
Outcomes for learners	No performance level available
Quality of provision	No performance level available
Leadership and management	No performance level available
Nursery Unit	No performance level available

KEY FINDINGS

5. Outcomes for learners

- The most able readers from year 7 enjoy reading and use a wide range of strategies to read with fluency and expression. The children are able to: talk about their reading preferences; speak knowledgeably and confidently about a wide range of authors and their writing styles; and, compare and contrast media texts to written texts.
- The most able children in year 7 demonstrate a sound knowledge of the key mathematical concepts. By the end of key stage (KS) 2, the children apply their mathematical skills to arrive at solutions to the challenges set for them and have a very good understanding across the areas of mathematics. They use appropriate mathematical vocabulary to articulate well a variety of strategies in problem solving.
- In information and communication technology (ICT), the children in all key stages use a wide range of devices and applications to develop their communication and problem-solving skills and their creativity.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the learning outcomes for the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning;
- progression in the children's learning; and
- the children's wider skills and dispositions.

6. Quality of provision

The ETI was unable to evaluate:

- the quality of the curriculum;
- the effectiveness of the guidance and support in bringing about high quality individual learning experiences;
- the effectiveness and impact of planning, teaching, learning and assessment in promoting successful learning; and
- care and welfare.

7. Leadership and management

- The school development plan (SDP) is comprehensive and is informed by extensive consultation with governors, staff, parents and children and by detailed evaluation of the previous SDP. The action plans and associated targets are aligned closely to the priorities of the SDP and there is a range of planned staff development opportunities to support the action to promote improvement.
- The senior leadership team provides clear strategic direction for the improvement work of the school. The senior leaders continue to build the capacity of middle leaders and promote a developing culture of self-evaluation informed by relevant data and by dissemination of good practice.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, the ETI evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are knowledgeable about the life and work of the school and carry out their challenge function to ensure the appropriateness of the improvement work undertaken.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the effectiveness of strategic leadership and governance;
- the effectiveness and impact of middle leadership; and
- the effectiveness of action to promote and sustain improvement.
- During the inspection, the school provided evidence that satisfactory arrangements for safeguarding reflect broadly the guidance issued by the relevant Departments. In discussion with inspectors, a group of children from year 6 reported that they feel safe in school. They know what to do and who to talk to if they are concerned about their safety or well-being. However, owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the outworking of the arrangements for safeguarding in the school.

CONCLUSION

8. Overall effectiveness

Owing to the impact of the action short of strike being taken by the staff, the ETI is unable to assure parents/carers, the wider school community and stakeholders of the quality of education being provided for the children. This will be reflected in future inspection activity.

Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the ETI website: [The Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework \(ISEF\): Effective Practice and Self-Evaluation Questions for Primary | Education Training Inspectorate](#)

Inspectors observe learning and teaching, scrutinise documentation and the children's written work and hold formal and informal discussions with children, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for inspection include:

- a meeting with a representative(s) from the governors;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Where, owing to the action short of strike, this evidence base was not available, it has been referenced in the body of the inspection report.

Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

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 ETI use the following performance levels when reporting on outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management²:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the school:

The school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The school needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

² And the overall provision in a subject area or unit, as applicable.

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