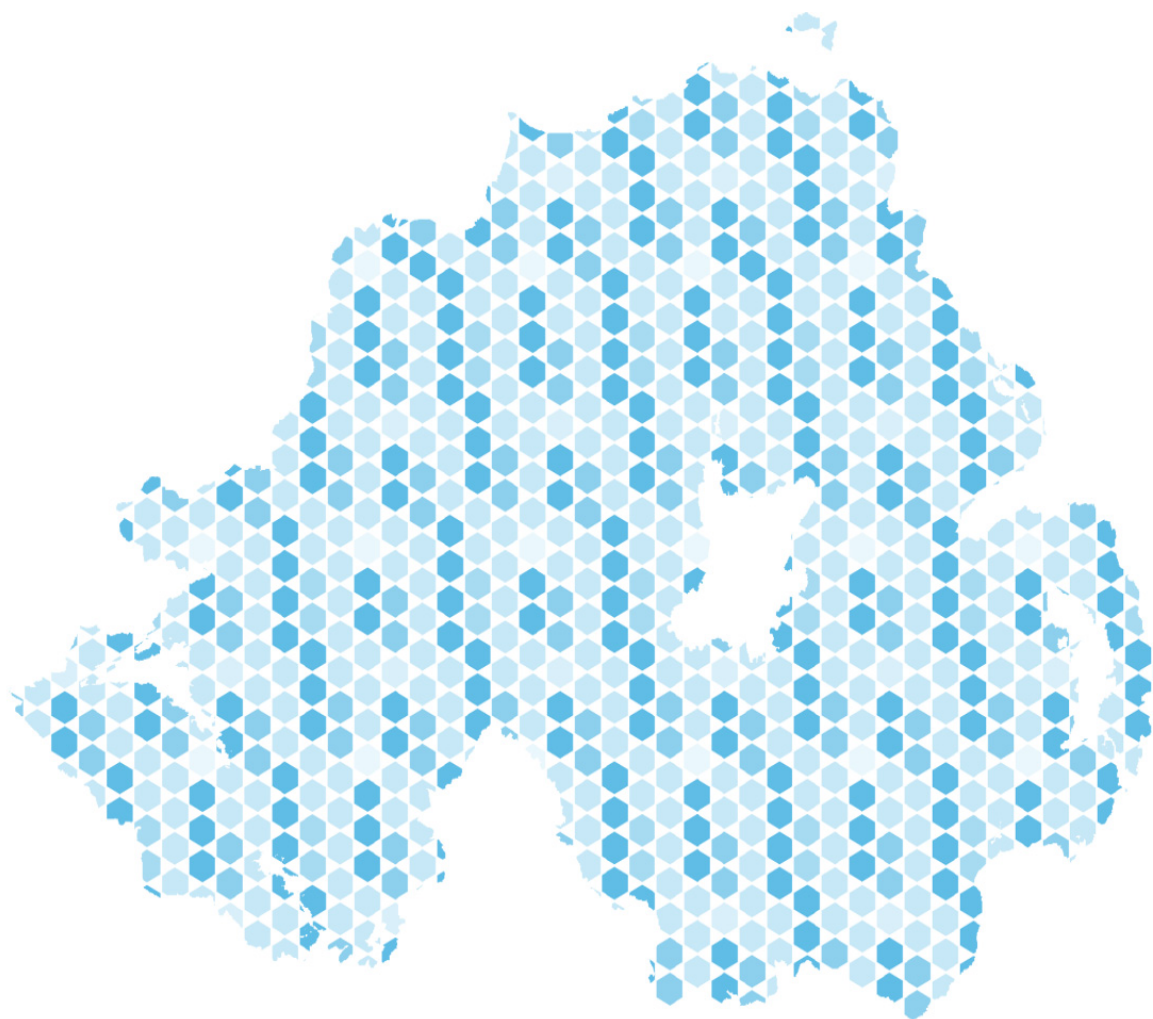


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Mary's Primary School and  
Special Unit (Glenview),  
Maghera

Report of an Inspection  
In March 2011

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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

## BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: St Mary's Primary (Glenview)**  
**Maghera**
- ii. **School Reference Number: 303-6039**
- iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 21/03/11**
- iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Year 1 Intake	34	27	35	45	34
<b>Enrolments</b>					
Primary	340	304	293	269	237
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Special Unit	14	10	10	14	14
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<br>(expressed as a percentage): |  | 94.6%                              | <b>NI Avg Att:</b> 94.9% |                              |   |
|    |   |  | <b>Primary &amp;<br/>Reception</b> | <b>Nursery<br/>Unit</b>  | <b>Special<br/>Unit</b>      |   |
|    |   |  |                                    |                          | <b>Irish Medium<br/>Unit</b> |   |
| D. | i.  | Number of Teachers<br>(including the principal and part-time teachers):<br>(Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)      | 11                                 | 0                        | 2                            | 0 |
|    | ii.   | PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio):   | 21.5                               | NI PTR: 20.7             |                              |   |
|    | iii.  | Average Class Size:  | 26.3                               |                          |                              |   |
|    | iv.   | Class Size (Range):  | 20 to 28                           |                          |                              |   |
|    | v.  | Ancillary Support:<br>Number of Hours <b>Per Week</b> :  |                                    |                          |                              |   |
|    |   | i. Clerical support:   |                                    |                          | 32.5                         |   |
|    |   | ii. Foundation Stage Classroom<br>Assistant Support:   |                                    |                          | 50                           |   |
|    |   | iii. Additional hours of other<br>classroom assistant support:   |                                    |                          | 82.5                         |   |
|    | vi.   | Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs:   |                                    |                          | 5.9%                         |   |
|    | vii.  | Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register:  |                                    |                          | 23.5%                        |   |
|    | viii.   | Number of children who are <b>not</b> of statutory school age:   |                                    |                          | 0                            |   |
|    | ix.   | Percentage of children entitled to free school meals:  |                                    |                          | 21.1%                        |   |
|    | x.  | Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2009/10<br>who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics: |                                    | <b>English</b><br>92%    | <b>Mathematics</b><br>92%    |   |

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Mary's Primary School is situated in the town of Maghera. The children who attend the school come mainly from the town. The enrolment of the school has decreased over the past five years and currently stands at 251 children. Fifteen children who have statements of educational need attend the two learning support centres (LSC). Approximately 21% of the children were entitled to receive free school meals and 24% were identified by the school as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning. There are currently 27 newcomer children enrolled in the school. At the time of the inspection one of the permanent teachers from the LSCs was on a secondment to the North-Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB).

### 1.2 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.

In addition, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning, and the school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection were evaluated.

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

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents and the teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and a group of the children from year 6.

Almost 28% of parental questionnaires from the primary school and the LSCs were returned to Inspection Services Branch. Nineteen returns included additional written comments. Most of the parents expressed a high level of satisfaction with the educational and pastoral provision provided by the school. In particular, they acknowledged the good progress their children make in their learning, the approachable staff and the care and support provided by the staff for the children.

Ten of the teachers and five members of the support staff completed the online questionnaire; there were four written comments. The responses indicated that the majority of staff is highly supportive of the work of the school.

The governors expressed their support, and are fully informed about the work of the school. They also highlighted a few concerns related to the challenges of the accommodation, and the traffic congestion at the school gates at the start and end of the school day (See Appendix).

The children in year 6 spoke very positively about their experiences in the school. They value the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided by the teachers. The children reported that they feel safe in the school and are aware of what to do if they have worries about their safety or well being.

An analysis of the questionnaires and the written comments was shared with the Principal and the governors.

#### 1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is outstanding.

There is a supportive, caring and inclusive ethos which promotes the children's confidence, self esteem and respect for others. The staff is committed to the welfare and well-being of the children and there is an effective whole-school approach to rewarding positive behaviour, which encourages the children to work hard. The children are very mannerly and respond well when the teachers' expectations are high. There are good opportunities for participating in sport, a wide range of after-school activities and regular visits to places of educational interest. The School Council is very active; for example, under the guidance of a member of staff who takes responsibility for the Extended Schools Programme, the children helped to organise and run a very successful Christmas craft fair. The newcomer children and their parents participate in a very effective induction programme and are invited to multi-cultural assemblies and other events designed to help them feel included in the school community.

#### 1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education (DE).

#### 1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives outstanding attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, the provision of healthy school meals and the emphasis placed on, and opportunities provided for, the children to participate in sports. These encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

#### 1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The school has developed excellent links with the parents and the wider community, and the views of parents are surveyed and acted upon. Parents receive regular information about the school and are encouraged to support their children's learning, through, for example, the provision of newsletters, information sessions, attendance at school events, teacher meetings and materials to support learning at home.

The school has developed sporting, educational and social links with a number of primary schools and with the local post-primary school and other organisations, such as the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA). Of particular note is the innovative practice of sharing assessment data across the local primary schools to promote improvement within the individual schools. The school raises funds for a number of charities each year. Opportunities to participate in programmes or facilities provided by local bodies, such as Magherafelt District Council, the fire service and local banks, are utilised fully for the benefit of the children.

The Extended Schools provision continues to support and enrich the educational and social experiences of the children, the parents and the wider community. A strong feature of this provision is the school's willingness to adapt and change the range of activities and clubs on offer in response to the needs and wishes of the children, the parents and the local community. This is exemplified by the school's current focus on providing for creative clubs, a greater range of sports such as golf and Jujitsu and the establishment of a highly-valued 'Mother and Toddler' group.

## **2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS**

### **2.1 LEARNING**

The children are friendly, courteous and well behaved and, in the majority of classes, take pride in their work. Where classroom routines are well established and learning experiences are well matched to their needs and abilities, the children engage well in their learning and work collaboratively with their peers. In the best practice, children set personal targets for improvement, complete tasks co-operatively, enjoying many opportunities to interact with each other in group and paired work and experience a range of appropriately challenging tasks and activities. In a minority of the classes, there is a need to encourage the children to be more independent in their learning.

The teachers take responsibility for the creation and implementation of the individual education plans (IEPs) for the children identified as having special educational needs (SEN). In most classes, the IEPs contain specific targets and outline appropriate strategies to guide the teaching and learning to address the individual pupil's needs. The IEPs are monitored closely and reviewed regularly by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and by the class teachers; assessment data indicates that most of the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning reach the standards of which they are capable and make good progress in English and mathematics. The parents and the children, where appropriate, are all involved in the individual target setting process and the parents are kept well informed about the progress their children make. The school is aware of the need to ensure greater consistency of the target setting in the IEPs across the school.

The school participates in the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) ICT Accreditation scheme in year 7.

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data over the past four years shows that in English and mathematics the school's performance has fluctuated; however, overall, there has been an upward trend and the performance was above the average for Northern Ireland (NI) in 2010. Compared with similar schools in the same free school meals category, the children's levels of attainment in English and mathematics have also shown improvement and are well above average in 2010. By the end of year 7, most children are achieving very good standards in English and mathematics which are in line with their ability.

### **2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY**

The overall quality of the provision in English and literacy is very good.

The children have very good opportunities to develop their listening and oracy skills. In play-based learning in the foundation stage (FS), and in whole class group discussions in KS1 and 2, the children interact well with one another, collaborate successfully and listen respectfully to the views of their peers. Very good relationships and effective questioning by the teachers and support staff encourage the children to extend their vocabulary and to participate with enthusiasm.

The children in FS are involved in a wide range of reading activities included those presented during stimulating play-based learning sessions, through whole class story-telling sessions and through shared reading with the teacher. The children are taught to read systematically across the school through the use of a commercial reading scheme, enhanced by a wide range of appropriate support materials such as novels, 'big books' and reference materials. In the FS and KS1, the majority of the children are developing effectively independent reading skills and are able to read unfamiliar words with ease. At KS2, the teachers have encouraged the further development of the children's reading skills through the introduction of the Accelerated Reading Programme. This initiative has resulted in the children reading with increasing confidence, understanding and accuracy. The enjoyment of reading is promoted further through timetabled silent reading in class and visits to the school library. All of the children in year 3 who are involved in the Better Reading Partnership Programme make good to significant progress.

The overall standard of the children's written work is very good. From the FS, the children are introduced to different forms of print, experiment with letter and word formation in many interesting ways, are encouraged to 'have a go', and the most able children are encouraged to write words and to express their ideas and opinions in simple sentences. In KS1 the children's skills are further developed and they often write in a more extended manner responding to books, poems, school events and visits. There are very good opportunities for emergent and for independent writing to develop and for the children to master a growing variety of written styles for different purposes and audiences. The school appropriately identified the need to provide more open-ended contexts for writing experiences for the children in KS2, and introduced the Young Writers' Poetry Competition, the Cross Border Poetry Ireland Scheme and the Extended School Literacy Club. These have resulted in higher quality, extensive, creative and imaginative prose, poetry and writing and the development of skills taught within relevant and interesting contexts, the results of which are celebrated in the relevant classrooms. The standards of presentation and the content of writing is mostly very good.

The children make use of a variety of software, cameras and on-line services, such as Learning NI, to research, to create, to communicate and to present. The English and literacy programme is appropriately broad and balanced; the medium-term planning is being developed further to facilitate a consistent approach to preparation, a clear structure for lessons enabling coherence and a sound basis for differentiation and progression in the children's development in talking and listening, reading and writing. The continuing development of the whole school programme ensures that all aspects of English and literacy are well integrated with each other to benefit learning across the curriculum.

The Principal and the vice principal, have appropriately introduced a culture of self-evaluation among all the teachers to improve the quality of the provision and experiences for the children. Shared moderation of samples of the children's work has recently been introduced throughout the whole school to enable the teachers to draw out the implications for their teaching, develop individual folders of progress for each child, review effectiveness in raising standards and identify where children would benefit from additional support.



## **2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY**

The overall quality of the provision in mathematics and numeracy is very good.

In the FS, the learning is matched well to the age and ability of the children. Numeracy is promoted effectively through opportunities for play-based learning. The children use mathematical language accurately, demonstrate a good understanding of early mathematical concepts and basic shape, and can sort, match and order number appropriately.

At KS1, the children use practical resources effectively to establish mathematical concepts and are able to demonstrate an appropriate understanding of number, shape and space, and handling data. In discussions with the year 4 children, the more able children demonstrated flexibility in their mathematical thinking and a good understanding of basic number, measures and shape and space.

The children engage well in an appropriate range of learning activities and, overall, make very good progress at KS2. In discussions with the year 7 children, the most able children have a good understanding of place value, number facts, measures, handling data, and shape and space. The school has identified the need to develop further the children's mental agility and problem solving skills. The inspection findings confirm that this is an appropriate area for ongoing development.

Across the key stages, the children enjoy their mathematics and the standards of numeracy presentation are good. Information and communication technology is used effectively to support the children's learning using, for example, the Roamer, interactive whiteboards, and numeracy software and websites. Mental mathematics skills are promoted and developed systematically throughout the school.

The mathematics curriculum is suitably broad and balanced; Parents are provided with useful information about the mathematics curriculum and strategies to support their child's numeracy learning at home.

## **3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING**

### **3.1 PLANNING**

The majority of teachers prepare thoroughly for lessons. The whole-school long-term planning provides an appropriate framework for progression and has been reviewed recently to raise the level of challenge, particularly for the more able children. Importantly, the medium-term planning is also being developed further, with a particular focus on ensuring that the planning for learning is matched more closely to the abilities of all of the children.

Connected learning is developing well through thematic planning, and 'planning boards' are used appropriately throughout most of the school. The teachers' evaluations of the learning and teaching are a recent introduction. The teachers need to focus more sharply on informing future planning for learning, demonstrating evidence of children's progress, curriculum development and whole-school self-evaluation.

### 3.2 TEACHING

During the inspection the quality of the teaching observed ranged from outstanding to inadequate; most of the teaching was good or better, with half of the lessons observed being of very good or outstanding quality. The school demonstrates a strong commitment to meeting the needs of all of the children and those with SEN are included fully in most of the lessons. The teaching in the withdrawal classes was of a high quality; the children enjoy these sessions and the interaction and rapport observed with the adults is excellent. Within the classes, the classroom assistants play a valuable role in supporting learning.

In the effective practice observed, the teachers used a wide range of teaching approaches, including effective and differentiated work, enjoyable and engaging practical activities, and individual and group work, enabling the children to work collaboratively. In addition, the learning intentions were shared with, and understood by, the children, the learning was paced appropriately and, on occasions, imaginative extension activities were integrated naturally into the lessons and were used to challenge the children's thinking. There was good use made of practical resources to reinforce key concepts, and plenary sessions were used effectively to summarise and extend the learning. The teachers used effective questioning to promote creativity and gave the children opportunities to explain their thinking.

In a minority of the lessons observed, when the practice was satisfactory or inadequate, there was a lack of structure to the lesson, children were not always clear about the purpose of the task, they were overly dependent on the teacher for seeking help, and the work was not well matched to their needs and abilities. In these lessons, the children's work was less well-presented, it lacked marking to guide improvement and the learning outcomes were too low.

### 3.3 ASSESSMENT

Overall, assessment for learning is good. There are appropriate procedures in place for assessing the children's learning and for keeping the parents well informed about their child's progress.

In the best practice, the teachers demonstrate a clear understanding of individual learning styles and use an appropriately wide range of assessment for learning strategies. They provide the children with useful feedback on how to improve their learning, particularly in literacy, and the children identify their own learning targets. A more consistent approach towards assessment for learning is needed across the school with, in particular, a sharper focus on linking in-class assessment with planning.

The school makes very effective use of standardised assessment data to inform teaching and learning, and whole-school self-evaluation. The progress of cohorts of children is tracked closely and the school is extending appropriately the use of data to track the progress of individual children and to identify underachievement. An appropriate range of intervention strategies is used very successfully to meet the needs of these children, through, for example, intensive and skilful withdrawal sessions for individuals, small groups of children, and in-class support provided by the SENCO and two classroom assistants.

## **4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **4.1 LEADERSHIP**

The quality of leadership and management in this school is very good. The Principal sets a positive tone for the school through open channels of communication with the children, parents and staff; he is committed to the well-being of the children. He thinks strategically and has demonstrated clear evidence of leading improvement and of effective self-evaluation. He has led innovations which have resulted directly in raising standards. The Principal empowers co-ordinators to lead effectively their own particular areas of responsibility; appropriate monitoring and evaluation procedures have been put in place as part of the school's self-evaluation process, with a clear focus on raising standards. The Principal is very well supported by a highly effective vice principal and senior management team (SMT) who work collaboratively.

The SENCO provides outstanding leadership and management of the provision. She has been instrumental in the innovative approaches adopted to develop staff training to enhance the provision within the school and to ensure that the needs of all the children can be met more effectively. She liaises well with class teachers, learning support staff and outside agencies to support those children who are having difficulty with their learning.

The numeracy coordinator is highly effective in her role; she monitors and evaluates the outworking of the teachers' planning and the quality of the children's work in mathematics, and leads effectively whole-school numeracy development. This work is based appropriately on self-evaluation in order to improve the quality of the provision.

The school is currently in the process of appointing a co-ordinator for literacy.

### **4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT**

The school has an appropriate school development plan (SDP) which sets out clearly the school's priorities and which meets fully the requirements of the Department of Education School Development Planning Regulations/Schedule 2005/19.

### **4.3 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE**

The governors are highly committed to the school and to the welfare of the children and their families. They support the Principal and the staff in the implementation of the school development plan.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 The strengths of the school include:**

- the outstanding quality of the provision for both pastoral care and SEN within an inclusive environment;
- the very good provision for literacy and numeracy, including the high standards achieved by the children by the end of KS2;
- the quality of the teaching observed, half of which was very good or outstanding;
- the broad and balanced curricular and extra curricular provision which enhances the children's learning experiences;

- the well-embedded culture of self evaluation, including the effective use of data to raise standards; and
- the highly effective leadership by the Principal and the SMT, supported well by the governors.

5.2 The area for improvement is:

- the need to improve the quality of the provision for the younger children in the learning support centre.

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the pupils and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

**ST MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL: LEARNING SUPPORT CENTRES**

There are two learning support centres within the school providing for the needs of 15 children with significant delays in their learning and attainment. The LSC1 provides for the younger children, and the LSC2, for children from the age of eight until they transfer to post primary schools at the end of KS2.

The quality of the provision in the LSCs is variable. It is best in LSC2 where the quality is very effective; the quality of the provision in the LSC1 needs to improve. In the best practice observed the learning is managed well with carefully planned and differentiated teaching, matched appropriately to the needs and interests of the children. The teacher and classroom assistants work effectively as a team to support the children. The lessons are well structured with good classroom routines and activities that challenge and engage well the pupils in learning across the subject areas. The detailed records of the children's needs are used effectively to track individual progress and plan future lessons or strategies to develop the potential of each child. The children are motivated and are developing their skills in mental and practical maths. They are given the opportunity to work in pairs and groups on occasions, building their social skills and abilities to work with others. The children achieve good standards in numeracy and literacy in relation to their starting points and particular emphasis is placed on preparing the children for the transition to post primary schools. The data indicates that most of the children transfer with appropriate skills and confidence to the LSC in St Patrick's College and strong links have been established between the relevant staff in both schools.

In the less effective practice there are significant areas for improvement; there is a need to develop effective classroom routines and to review the curriculum in order to provide a more appropriate match to the needs of the children who need a structured programme designed around their specific needs. During the inspection, the children, whilst engaged, were often involved in tasks that did not sufficiently challenge or help the development of their language skills, their social development or their basic understanding of numeracy and literacy. The teacher's planning, although detailed, lacked clarity and did not relate sufficiently to the development of basic numeracy, literacy and language.

There are appropriate arrangements in place for those children in both LSCs who have the ability to integrate into the mainstream classes with their peers; this practice is very effective.

There is a need for the staff in the two learning support centres to work more collaboratively and to share planning and assessment strategies. There is also a need for all LSC staff, with support, to build their capacity to meet the needs of those children with significant challenging behaviours and for the staff working with the younger children to develop a more appropriate curriculum to better meet the needs of those children.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the centre's progress on the area for improvement.

### **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- The traffic congestion at the school gates constitutes a health and safety hazard at the start and end of the school day.
- There is a need to ensure that the perimeter of the primary school and access to the school grounds and all entry points are secured.
- The small classrooms and lack of adequate storage constrains the effective delivery of aspects of the curriculum.
- There is lack of appropriate access for emergency vehicles to the rear of the building.

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