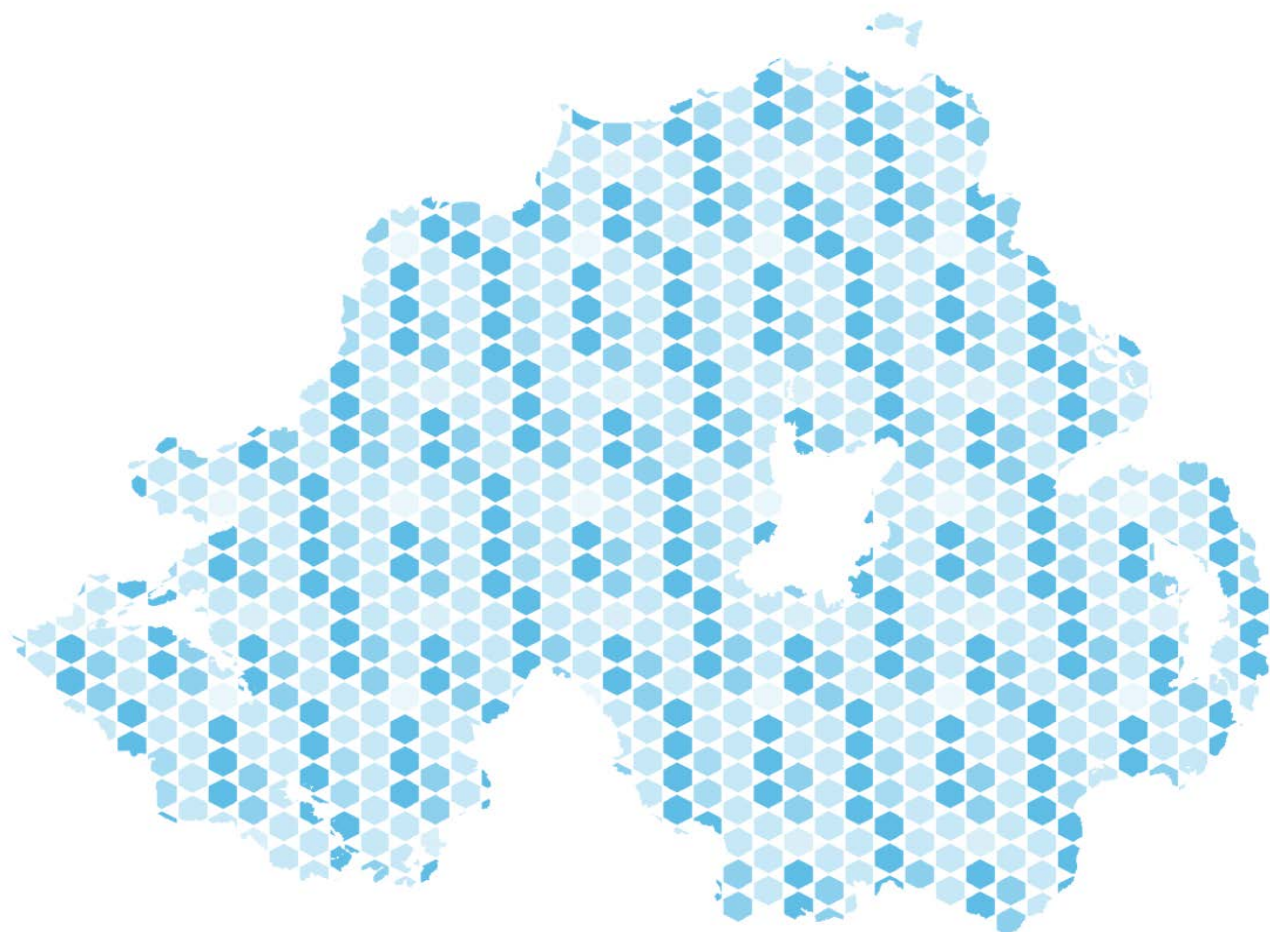


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Holy Cross Primary School,
Attical, County Down

Report of an Inspection in
June 2016



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing Inspection Services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
Department for Communities

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



Quantitative terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

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 when reporting on Achievement and standards, on Provision for learning and on Leadership and management:

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.

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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 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 learning and teaching, 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 a representative from the governors;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete confidential questionnaires.

Thirty-three percent of parents and 42% of staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. In the responses to the confidential questionnaire, the parents expressed their appreciation of the school's central place in the rural community and the range of educational experiences, including languages, drama and music, from which the children benefit. A minority of parents raised concerns about aspects of leadership, changes in staffing and safeguarding. The ETI has reported to the principal and a representative of the board of governors the main issues emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions. A significant minority of the staff completed the confidential questionnaire and their responses were generally positive.

2. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all children, the purpose of inspection is, through effective linking of internal and external approaches, to evaluate the:

- children's achievements and standards with a particular focus on literacy; including how the school is addressing low attainment and underachievement where applicable;
- quality of provision for learning with a particular focus on literacy; and
- quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

Holy Cross Primary School is situated in the village of Attical, in the Parish of Upper Mourne. Almost all of the children attending the school come from the immediate rural community. The enrolment has fallen slightly over the last four years. In the same period, the proportion of children entitled to free school meals, and the proportion requiring additional help with aspects of their learning, have increased significantly.

Holy Cross Primary School	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015- 6
Enrolment	130	125	117	118
% School attendance	95.8	96.2	96.1	N/A
% NI Primary school average	94.9	95.6	95.4	N/A
FSME Percentage ¹	16.15	19.2	23.07	27.9
% of children on SEN register	16.15	18.4	23.07	27.96
No. of children with statements of educational needs	*	*	*	*

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

N/A not available

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Address urgently the significant areas for improvement
Achievements and standards	Important areas for improvement
Provision for learning	Requires significant improvement
Leadership and management	Requires significant improvement

5. Achievements and standards

- The teachers do not plan sufficiently for the development of the children's thinking skills and personal capabilities in lessons. As a consequence, their creativity, management of their own work and active engagement with their peers are limited. The children have, however, a positive disposition to their learning, are co-operative and engage readily in tasks and activities. Their behaviour is consistently good.
- The standards attained in English are an important area for improvement. A minority of children are underachieving, as indicated in the school's standardised assessments, and this is reflected in the quality of work in the children's books. Across the year groups, the children's writing is generally well presented. However, spelling, punctuation and grammar are often used inaccurately in extended and independent writing. The children's oral skills are under-developed. The most able children in year 7 read fluently, decode unfamiliar words with confidence and demonstrate a good level of understanding.
- The school's internal performance data shows that almost 90% of the children make progress in mathematics in line with, or above, expectation. Just over 75% of the children make similar progress in English. Most of the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning make progress in line with expectation in English and in mathematics.

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

6. Provision for learning

- In the majority of lessons observed during the inspection, there were important areas for improvement. In these lessons, the teachers did not extend sufficiently the children's learning and enhance their oral and thinking skills. In the effective practice, in a significant minority of lessons, the teachers' classroom management is skilful; they establish good working relationships with the children and engage them well in the intended learning. The teachers do not provide the children with sufficient feedback on how to improve the quality and standard of their work.
- The teachers' medium-term and short-term planning provides a broad framework for progression, but lacks detailed, practical strategies for differentiation within the composite classes. The school's internal performance data is not being used effectively to inform the teachers' planning to meet the needs of all the children; consequently, there is insufficient support to enable all the children to make the expected progress.
- As part of the special educational needs provision, the staff have recently put in place intervention strategies for children who require additional support with their learning in mathematics. The progress of the children identified for support in numeracy is being tracked well, but the class teachers do not use this information consistently to set appropriate targets in the individual education plans. Within the individual education plans, there are too many targets which are too general, so it is difficult for the staff to evaluate accurately the children's progress in meeting them. In literacy, the children have difficulty with decoding words and with phonological awareness. The staff have identified appropriately the need to re-establish reading support to develop the children's skills. The progress of children who require additional support with their learning, and the effectiveness of teaching strategies and intervention programmes are not monitored and reviewed robustly enough.
- The provision for literacy is an important area for improvement. While the two-weekly planning provides a broad framework for progression, there is an over-reliance on closed grammatical or comprehension-based exercises. As a consequence, the children have limited activities in which to develop their extended and independent writing. The teachers provide insufficient opportunities for the children to articulate their thinking and justify their reasoning.
- The arrangements for the pastoral care of the children are an important area for improvement. The children's experiences in the classroom are unduly limited and do not support consistently their learning, resulting in underachievement. They are, however, given opportunities to develop their leadership skills and they speak with enthusiasm about the opportunities available to help them play an increasingly active role in decisions which affect them directly. There is a broad range of after-school clubs which appeals to the children's varied interests, enabling them to develop a range of sporting, cultural and inter-personal skills.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, notably through the opportunities for the children to use a wide range of play equipment at lunch and to participate in sports, thereby encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The quality of leadership and management requires significant improvement. Due to sustained discontinuity in staffing, the principal has had to take on significant co-ordinator responsibilities and manage a team in which the majority of teachers are employed on a temporary basis and are new to the school. In this context, leadership in key curricular areas is neither consistent nor effective.
- While there is appropriate consultation with the children, parents, teachers and governors regarding the school development plan², the information collated from these consultations is not being used effectively to identify the priorities for school improvement. The school's internal performance data is not being analysed sufficiently to inform the action-planning process to address the children's underachievement in literacy and their limited learning experiences.
- The school liaises with a range of outside agencies to extend the children's learning. In particular, the children have participated in awareness-raising sessions in road and water safety, and have attended recently a science and technology event at a local post-primary school. The children's knowledge of modern languages is being nurtured well through their learning of Irish, German and Spanish. The school is engaged in a German and Chinese educational exchange programme.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be limited confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are very supportive of the school. However, in order to carry out more effectively their statutory responsibilities, they need to:
 - access the statutory training in governance as soon as it is made available;
 - be better informed about the standards attained by the children and the quality of their learning experiences in order to be more directly involved in the school development and action planning processes; and
 - work with, and provide an effective challenge function to, the senior leaders and the employing authority to address the areas for improvement in learning and teaching.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school's arrangements for safeguarding children are unsatisfactory and do not reflect adequately the guidance issued by the Department of Education. In particular, the school needs to:
 - establish more robust systems to record and store information relating to safeguarding; implement more rigorous processes for investigating any safeguarding concern; and
 - review the relevant policy documents.

² The school development plan meets partially the requirements of the School Development Planning Regulations (2010) NI.

- In discussions with the inspectors, the year 6 children reported that they feel happy and secure in school, and know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.

8. Overall effectiveness

Holy Cross Primary School needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all learners. It requires external support to do so.

The areas for improvement are to:

- review urgently the arrangements for safeguarding children and update them in line with the guidance issued by the Department of Education;
- address the areas for improvement in learning and teaching identified at each key stage, in order to raise the standards attained by all the children; and
- build a team of co-ordinators with the capacity to monitor, review and effect improvement within their respective areas of responsibility.

The ETI will return to the school within six weeks to monitor progress in addressing the safeguarding issues.

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 in 18 to 24 months.

ADDENDUM ON SAFEGUARDING ARRANGEMENTS - SEPTEMBER 2016

HOLY CROSS PRIMARY SCHOOL, ATTICAL, COUNTY DOWN (503-1694)

In line with the child protection/safeguarding procedures of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), the district inspector and the reporting inspector from the original inspection returned to Holy Cross Primary School on 20 September 2016 as a follow-up to the inspection which took place on 1 and 2 June 2016; the purpose of the visit was to ensure that the safeguarding issues, evaluated as unsatisfactory in the inspection, had been addressed.

On the basis of the evidence available, the revised arrangements were evaluated as satisfactory.

During the interim period, the school had received support from the Child Protection School Support Service of the Education Authority and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools.

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