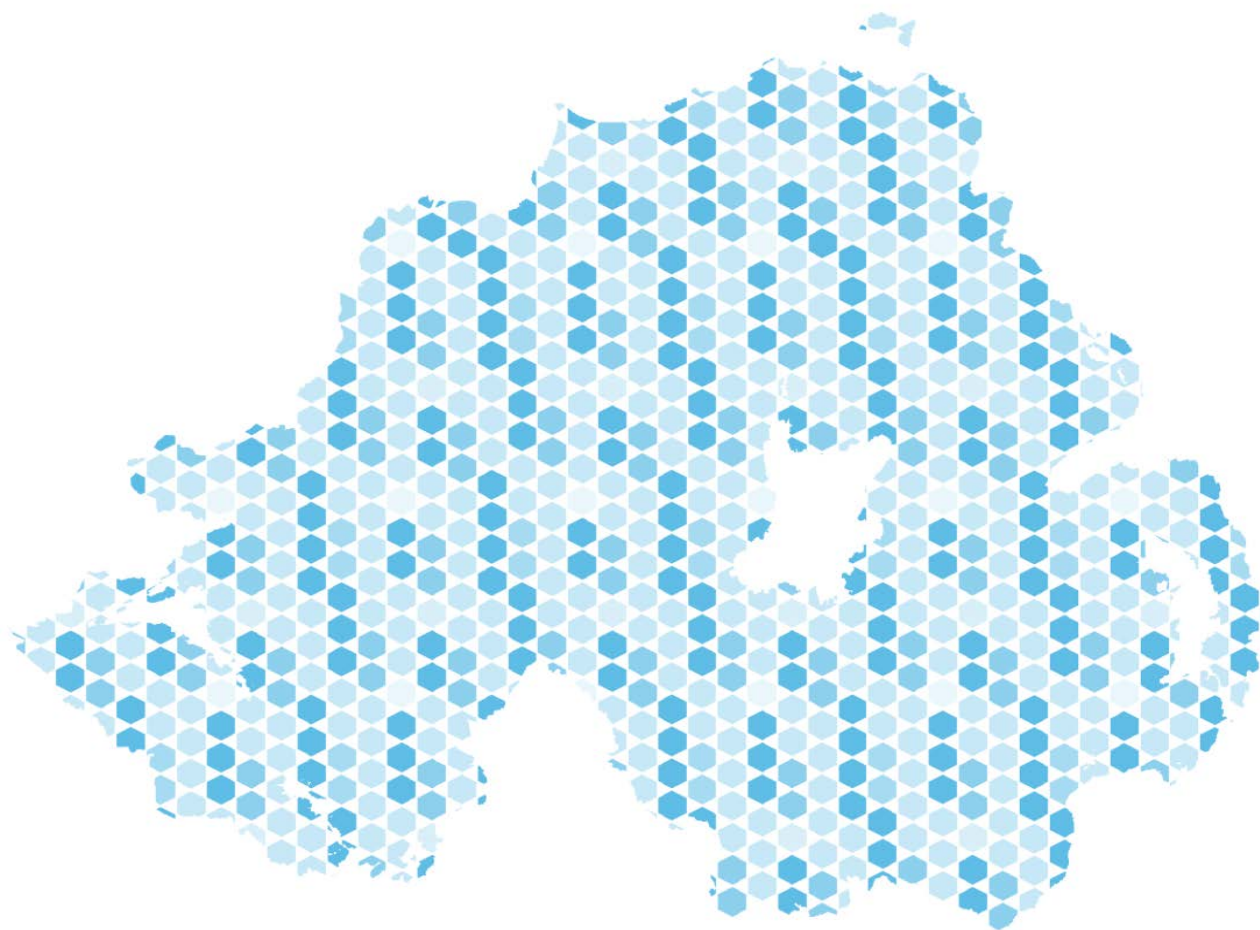


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Aloysius Primary School,  
Lisburn, County Antrim

Report of an Inspection in  
January 2016

*eti*

*The Education and Training Inspectorate -  
Promoting Improvement*

Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education  
Department for Employment and Learning  
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER  
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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.

# Contents

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. Inspection method and evidence base	1
2. Focus of inspection	1
3. Context	1
4. Overall findings of the inspection	2
5. Achievements and standards	2
6. Provision for learning	3
7. Leadership and management	5
8. Overall effectiveness	6
Appendix	

## **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 representatives from the governors;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Ten percent of parents and 58% of staff responded to the questionnaires. The responses to the parental questionnaire indicated high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted their appreciation of the teachers' and support staff's care for the children; the high expectations for their learning; the quality of the enrichment activities provided within the school and the effective leadership of the principal. The responses to the staff questionnaire were also very positive; they emphasised in particular the quality of the working relationships across the school and the opportunities made available to them for continuing professional development. The ETI has reported to the principal and representatives of the board of governors the small number of issues emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

## **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 in literacy and numeracy; including how the school is addressing low attainment and underachievement where applicable;
- quality of provision for learning in the school, including the nursery unit; and
- quality of leadership and management.

## **3. Context**

St Aloysius Primary School is a maintained primary school situated on the Ballinderry Road in the city of Lisburn. Nearly all of the children attending the school come from the local area. The enrolment has risen steadily over the past four years. The percentage of children entitled to free school meals and the proportion requiring additional help with aspects of their learning have increased annually over the past three years.

The school has established a shared education partnership with a local controlled primary school and a local special school.

St Aloysius Primary School	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Enrolment	327	363	377	406
% School attendance	93.1	94.1	94.0	N/A
% NI Primary school average	94.9	95.6	94.5	N/A
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	33	31	32	35.1
No. of children on SEN register	74	75	78	81
% of children on SEN register	19	15	17	19.7
No. of children with statements of educational need	*	6	8	9
No. of newcomer children	65	71	84	71

**Source:** data as held by the school.

N/A not available

\* = fewer than 5

#### 4. Overall findings of the inspection

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
<b>Achievements and standards</b>	Very good
<b>Provision for learning</b>	Very good
<b>Leadership and management</b>	Outstanding
<b>Nursery Unit</b>	Very good

#### 5. Achievements and standards

- The children's behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. They demonstrate positive dispositions for learning, engaging with a high degree of focus in the collaborative and independent learning experiences provided for them. When given the opportunity, the children are able to think creatively and to reflect on and discuss their learning with maturity. They present their work to a very high standard.
- The school's performance data indicates that almost all children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make progress in literacy in line with their ability or above expectation. Most children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make progress in mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation.
- Almost all of the children speak with confidence about their learning and engage willingly in class discussions, role-play and drama. As they progress through the school, they write for meaningful purposes across a wide range of genres with increasing competence and accuracy. Throughout the school, the children develop systematically a range of reading strategies and have a positive attitude to reading. By year 7, the most able children read enthusiastically, with fluency and expression, and talk confidently about the material they are reading and their favourite authors.

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

- The children enjoy mathematics and engage well in the practical numeracy lessons. Throughout the school, in paired and group work, the children talk confidently about their mathematical thinking and can persevere at investigative tasks. The most able children in year 7 have a sound knowledge of key mathematical concepts across all areas of the mathematics curriculum and can solve problems using a high level of mathematical reasoning and flexibility.
- The children in the nursery are very well settled and confident in the daily routines. They make independent choices and play purposefully for sustained periods, both individually and collaboratively. The children demonstrate a keen interest in the natural environment and enjoy the opportunities to develop early scientific skills through hands-on experience with natural materials. They participate fully in well-delivered song and rhyme sessions and display imagination in their use of art and construction materials.
- The children use information and communication technology (ICT) with increasing confidence and independence to demonstrate and extend their learning through, for example, a range of desktop publishing and the effective use of 'apps' to support language development.

## **6. Provision for learning**

- In all of the lessons observed, the learning environment was stimulating and working relationships were of a high quality. In the effective practice, in most of the lessons observed, the learning experiences provided for the children were creative, engaging and seamlessly linked to other areas of the curriculum. Thorough planning supported appropriately differentiated, purposeful opportunities for the children to work together to undertake investigations, to discuss their thinking and to progress their learning. The teachers used questioning effectively to develop the children's oral responses. The school's considerable investment in ICT resources has supported well the development of the children's digital skills and ICT was used effectively to promote independence and resilience in learning.
- In a minority of lessons, the planning did not focus adequately on learning and there was an over-reliance on templates or worksheets, resulting in missed opportunities to challenge further the children in their learning and extend their thinking. The school, through monitoring and evaluation, has already identified this issue and has begun to address it, in order to promote greater consistency in the learning experiences across the key stages.
- The provision for the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning is very good. The children's needs are identified early and addressed promptly through a range of appropriate interventions, including effective withdrawal and outreach support for speech and language development, literacy and numeracy. All interventions and their impact on learning are closely monitored by the special education needs coordinator and the teachers who provide additional support for learning. Within lessons, the classroom assistants provide skilful, sensitive support to the children with their learning. The individual education plans (IEPs) do not include sufficient information on the strengths of each child, nor are the children sufficiently involved in setting targets for, and reviewing, their own progress. The school has appropriately identified the need to develop the IEPs and their use further.

- The detailed planning for literacy ensures continuity and progression across the key stages; guides well the learning and teaching in all aspects of literacy; and promotes effectively the integration of literacy in a range of meaningful contexts across all areas of the curriculum. The children's confidence and enthusiasm to read and their development as independent readers have been enabled through, for example: the recent and ongoing training opportunities to build further the capacity of all staff; the investment in a range of stimulating resources; and the implementation of a range of additional initiatives and support programmes, such as reciprocal reading, reading partnerships, accelerated reader and the reading booster club. The school has identified appropriately the need to provide further opportunities for the children to write independently in the foundation stage.
- The teachers use well a wide range of strategies, including the appropriate use of ICT, to foster the children's enjoyment, confidence and aptitude in mathematics. Across the key stages, the highly effective use of problem-solving tasks and investigative activities ensures the children engage well in their learning and understand fully the relevance and application of mathematics in everyday life. The teachers exploit appropriately the opportunities to promote and develop further the children's knowledge and understanding of mathematics in other areas of the curriculum, particularly in the 'world around us' and through play-based learning. The long term and medium term planning for numeracy is coherent, provides a useful framework to guide the teachers in their work and supports the appropriate breadth of coverage for all areas of the mathematics curriculum.
- The quality of provision in the nursery is very good. The play programme is broad and well-balanced and provides good and very good opportunities for learning across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The staff develop the children's language and thinking through their involvement in the children's play and they listen and respond carefully to the children's ideas. Regular observations undertaken by the staff, supported by samples and photographs of the children's work, are used effectively to assess the children's learning and development and inform future planning to meet their individual needs.
- The school's highly effective pastoral care provision is underpinned by its inclusive ethos and its vision: 'to live, love and learn in a caring Catholic community'. The children's learning experiences are enriched by a wide-ranging extra-curricular programme, including well-conceived opportunities to learn together with their peers from other primary and post-primary schools. The holistic development of the children is supported by the school's positive approaches to behaviour management, by an effective and responsive preventative education curriculum and by appropriate engagement with external agencies to meet the children's diverse needs. The school's house system recognises and celebrates the children's successes and is integral to promoting the sense of harmony and community which is present within the school. Through their engagement with the Student Council, the Eco Council and the year 6 and 7 Playground Squad, the children undertake leadership roles and contribute meaningfully to the improvement of their school.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, through a range of health-promoting policies, an effective health education programme and a wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

## 7. Leadership and management

- The senior leadership of the school provides outstanding strategic guidance and direction, underpinned by high expectations, professional knowledge and competence and a clear focus on learning and teaching. The priorities of the school development plan<sup>2</sup> are identified in consultation with all members of the school community and are informed by the school's comprehensive and robust processes of self-evaluation, including the highly effective use of a range of internal performance data.
- Action to effect improvement is strategic, timely, highly effective and thoroughly evaluated. The senior leadership gives a high priority to building capacity within the school; staff expertise is well understood and has been developed and deployed insightfully to ensure high quality working relationships, effective peer-led professional learning and improved experiences and outcomes for the children. The range and quality of relationships with other educational providers is a significant strength of the school; for example, the highly effective key stage co-ordinators have developed well their knowledge and expertise through their involvement in professional cluster groups with other schools.
- The school's collaborative working partnerships enhance the children's personal and social development and prepare them well for the next stage in their learning. There is open and effective communication with parents through: an informative website; a range of meetings, such as the twice-yearly parent interviews, settling-in meetings and curricular evenings; and regular publications, such as the weekly newsletter. Through the deployment of two bi-lingual support staff from the local community, the school works hard to provide families with the opportunity to engage with their children's learning through their home languages. The Parents, Teachers and Friends Association (PTFA) is highly active in supporting the school, in particular through extensive fund-raising to provide furniture for the ICT suite and to resource the planned outdoor play provision.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, ETI's evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The board of governors comprises members with wide-ranging expertise who have long-standing relationships with the school, therefore inspiring the confidence of staff and parents. Through their links with the co-ordinators of key areas, the governors are closely involved in the life and work of the school, exercising an appropriate support and challenge function to leadership at all levels.
- 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. In discussions with the inspectors, the children in year 6 reported that they are happy and secure in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their well-being.

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<sup>2</sup> The school development plan meets the requirements of the School Development Planning Regulations (NI) 2010



## **8. Overall effectiveness**

St Aloysius Primary 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.

**Health and Safety / Accommodation**

1. Minor Works applications were approved by DE on 30 December 2015 to address the following aspects of the school accommodation:
  - the inadequate toilet provision for the children and staff;
  - the insufficient outdoor play space and car parking, including the access to the nursery unit which involves the children and parents walking through the vehicle access area; and
  - the re-positioning of the school reception to the foyer.
2. Three of the exit doors, which form part of the fire evacuation route, exit on to a narrow path of around one metre in width between St Aloysius Primary School and the boundary fence of the adjacent school. It is recommended that a risk assessment is carried out by an appropriate authority.

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