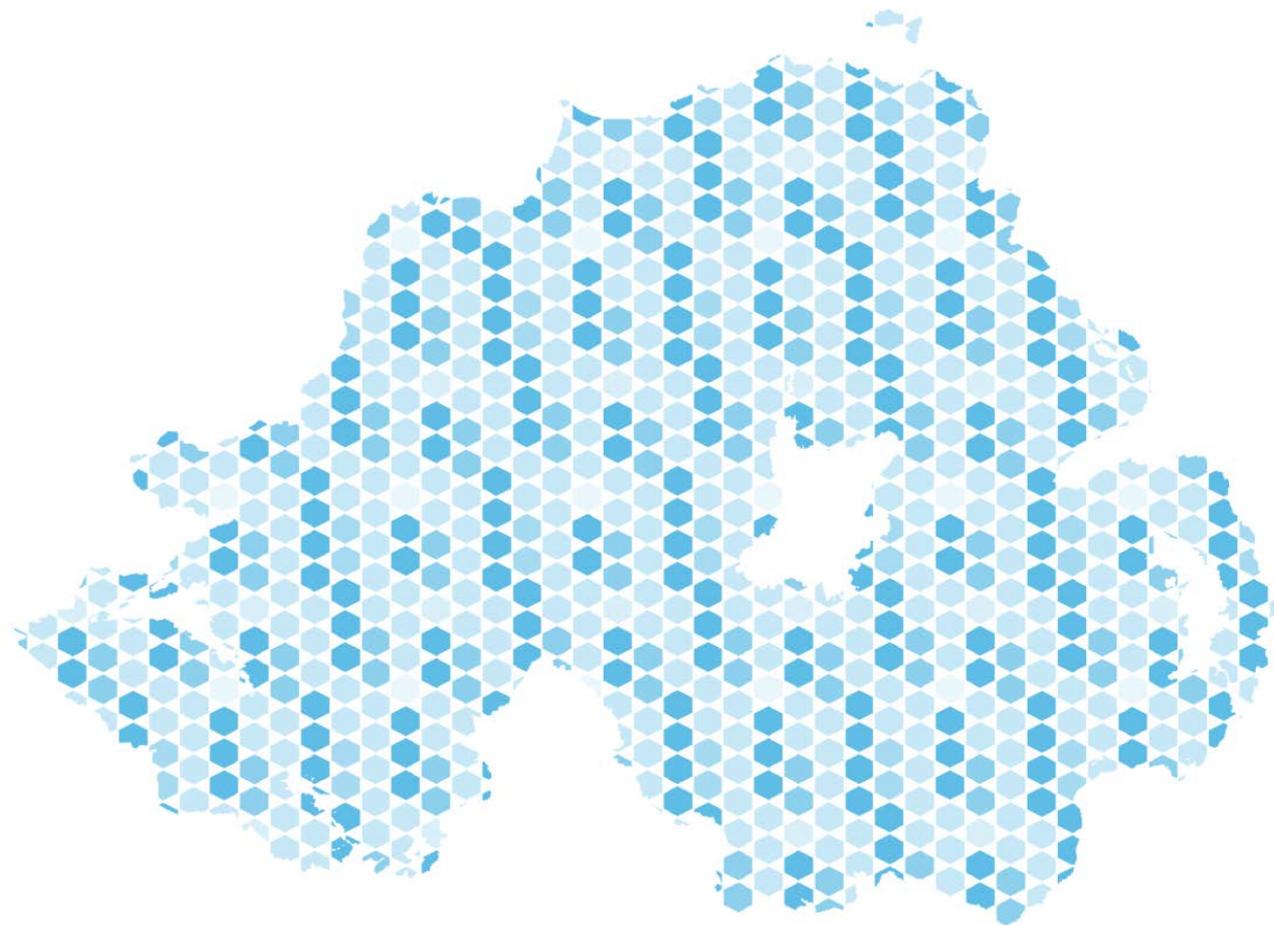


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Catherine's Primary School
and Nursery Unit, Strabane,
County Tyrone

Report of an Inspection in
May 2016



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing Inspection Services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
Department for Communities



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

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

Eleven percent of parents and 79 percent 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 expressed their praise for the leadership and vision of the principal and her team, the hard work of the staff and the skilful way in which the amalgamation of the former boys' and girls' schools was planned for and implemented. The responses to the staff questionnaires were positive; they emphasised the importance of the work undertaken in preparation for the amalgamation, the clarity of the vision for the new school and the opportunities to engage in professional development. The ETI has discussed with the principal and the chair of the board of governors the positive responses and comments reported through the questionnaires.

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;
- the quality of provision for learning in the school and the nursery unit; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

St Catherine's Primary School and Nursery Unit is a maintained co-educational primary school situated in Strabane. The school, which opened in September 2014, is an amalgamation of the former Barrack Street Boys' Primary School and St Anne's Girls' Primary School. Almost all of the children attending the nursery unit and the school come from the immediate area. The school is oversubscribed; enrolment has remained steady and currently stands at 479, including 60 children in the nursery unit.

St. Catherine's Primary School	2014-15	2015-16
Enrolment	475	479
% School attendance	94	N/A
% NI Primary school average	95.4	N/A
FSME Percentage ¹	61.26	60.13
No. of children on SEN register	63	95
% of children on SEN register	13.6	23
No. of children with statements of educational need	5	11
No. of newcomer children	16	18

Source: data as held by the school.
N/A not available

4. Overall findings of the inspection

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

5. Achievements and standards

- The children show very high levels of respect and courtesy to their friends, to teachers and to visitors; their behaviour is exemplary. Their attitudes to learning, dispositions and wider skills are developing very well. They have realistically high expectations of themselves, engage enthusiastically in the learning, and display very good levels of perseverance and resilience. The work presented in their books is of a very high standard. The children are justifiably very proud of their efforts. As they move through the school, the children become increasingly independent and develop as informed and responsible members of the school community.
- The school's performance data shows that almost all of the children, including those who require additional support in aspects of their learning, make progress in English and achieve at or above expectation. Most of the children make progress in mathematics and a majority of those who require additional support with aspects of their learning make progress in mathematics and achieve at or above expectation.

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

- The children in the nursery unit are very well settled and are making very good progress in all aspects of their learning and development. They spend sustained periods concentrating on tasks with confidence and have developed high levels of independence. The children participate fully in well managed song, rhyme and story sessions and show imagination and creativity in the role-play areas. Almost all of the children are attempting letter formation and can write their name and other key words. They join readily in play, communicate effectively with each other and talk to the staff and visitors about their work and learning experiences.
- Throughout the school, the children demonstrate well-developed literacy skills in reading, writing and talking and listening. The children show enthusiasm for reading and, by year 7, they read fluently, expressively and with very good comprehension. In discussions about their reading, the children draw upon a range of strategies to explain more complex words and phrases and make inferences. Across the key stages, the children write with accuracy and flair for a range of purposes and audiences; from an early age, they are developing confidently and competently an individual, personal style of writing. Their writing is presented consistently to a very high standard; the children's handwriting skills, across the school, are outstanding.
- The children are well disposed to learning in mathematics and participate confidently in mental mathematics activities. In the foundation stage, the children engage enthusiastically with mathematical challenges, particularly those of a practical nature, where they enjoy working independently. The children demonstrate an increasing competence from foundation stage through to year 7, using processes with increasing effectiveness in all of the key areas. The children are competent working in pairs and listen well to one another's opinions and explanations. They enjoy their learning and articulate their reasoning using appropriate mathematical language. By year 7, the most able children demonstrate very good levels of competence: they can think flexibly and use mathematical processes very effectively.
- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning in literacy and numeracy make good progress evaluated against the targets in their individual education plans.
- Across the key stages, the children are increasingly confident in their use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support their learning. There is progression in the children's knowledge and understanding of ICT, the development of their skills and their ability to use ICT in a variety of contexts.

6. Provision for learning

- Most of the lessons observed during the inspection were good; forty percent of the lessons were very good or better, including a small number which were outstanding. This excellent classroom practice was characterised by well focused planning which was informed regularly by insightful evaluations of the children's previous learning. A particular strength of the lessons observed was the highly effective interaction between the teachers and classroom assistants, which supported and challenged appropriately the children, enabling them to make excellent progress in their learning. In the less effective practice, in fewer than twenty percent of the lessons observed, there were not enough opportunities for the children to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding.

- The stimulating indoor and outdoor learning environment provided in the nursery unit promotes effectively the children's development, decision making and self-management skills. The staff are caring and supportive in their approach; they listen attentively to the children, take account of their ideas and promote skilfully the children's language development. The very good quality of the staff interactions with the children ensure that the opportunities for learning through play, daily routines and group story sessions are exploited fully. In particular, the children have opportunities to develop their physical skills in a variety of spacious outdoor areas including a recently created woodland which provides a stimulating natural environment for the children to explore. The staff plan an interesting and varied programme that provides challenge and progression for the children throughout the year; they use an appropriate range of methods to gather information about the children's development.
- Across the school and the nursery, the teachers work closely and effectively with the highly skilled classroom assistants to meet the needs of all the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning. Significant resources are allocated to meeting the children's increasingly complex needs; these include individual interventions which are adapted appropriately. The skilful analysis of qualitative and quantitative data and the well-embedded monitoring arrangements ensure that the progress of the children is continuously under review and their development is tracked.
- The whole-school literacy provision has been audited thoroughly and comprehensive plans have been put in place to guide the development of reading, writing and talking and listening skills; connecting effectively the key strands in a coherent, progressive way across the key stages. The children enjoy and benefit from a literacy-rich learning environment which includes a recently introduced computer-based reading programme. The teaching of writing is highly effective and is a particular strength of the school; a key feature is the meaningful and purposeful opportunities teachers provide for extended writing within numeracy and across the curriculum for all key stages. Consequently, the children's development as independent readers and writers and enjoyment of reading and writing are fostered effectively from an early age.
- The provision for mathematics includes opportunities for the children to organise their ideas and think flexibly thereby developing their problem solving skills. The children enjoy completing challenging practical tasks and working independently and in small groups. The agreed planning format ensures all of the children learn the appropriate key concepts and processes in each year. The children's learning and the development of their numeracy skills are limited, however, by a narrow range of activities relating to mathematics in real life and meaningful contexts. In addition, the special educational needs programme lacks sufficient review of the quality of the intervention programmes and the extent of the children's progress in numeracy.
- The planning for the pastoral care provision in the primary school and nursery unit is well conceived and supports families in preparing their children for learning. The school community is demonstrating its commitment to its shared vision and mission statement by creating a learning community where children, parents, staff and governors work together to achieve high standards with mutual care and support of one another. There is evidence that the children's views are listened to and acted upon; they continue to make a valuable contribution to the

development of the recently amalgamated school, including through the school council, where they have played an important role in agreeing a range of school policies. The children display a very good awareness of and response to the needs of their peers and others. They benefit from very good opportunities to develop their interests further through the wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities such as educational visits, music and opportunities to perform in school events and take part in competitions; these develop very well the children's talents and confidence.

- The school and nursery unit gives outstanding attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, through highly effective engagement with a wide range of external bodies. The nursery unit provides a range of outdoor play areas for physical development and exploration. In addition, the agreed implementation of a healthy eating policy and a range of sporting activities within the school encourage the children to adopt a positive approach to exercise and a healthy lifestyle. The work of the school community in promoting healthy lifestyles was given recently external recognition through the Action Cancer Gold Award.

7. Leadership and management

- The work of the senior leadership team places an important focus on creating a culture of ambition and achievement. The strategic, systematic and well-paced work in preparation for amalgamation has resulted in an increasingly cohesive school community which places the child at the centre of all developments. The senior leadership team, working in close collaboration with the staff, is highly effective in creating a collegial and supportive approach to developing consistency and improving further the well-being, learning, and standards achieved by every child.
- The school development plan (SDP)² is very well informed by the school's highly effective self-evaluation processes, including the adept use of extensive internal school data. The SDP outlines a range of agreed priorities for development across the school's and nursery unit's provision; these are underpinned by clear and appropriate action plans, which guide very well the work of the co-ordinators and the teachers. There are effective processes in place to monitor and evaluate regularly the impact and sustained effectiveness of the actions taken. The school's plans for development are very well informed by extensive consultation with the children, parents, staff and governors; the impact of the improvement work is evident in the very high quality of the provision and in the high standards attained by the children.
- The school has a clear and perceptive understanding of the current and future needs and interests of the children, and the local community. As a result, very strong links have been established with a wide variety of statutory and non-statutory agencies. The children benefit from the range of varied yet complementary skills that professionals other than teachers bring to the school. The parents are kept very well informed about their children's progress and achievements through, for example, regular meetings, newsletters and the school website. A range of well-conceived workshops provide practical guidance to parents on how they can support their child's learning.

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

- Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are extremely well informed about the life and work of the school and take a proactive role in the school improvement process; for example, in engaging fully in the amalgamation process and monitoring the progress of the children most at risk of not achieving their potential. The governors are highly reflective and support very well the staff in the continuous improvement of the provision and raising further the standards the children attain.
- 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 feel happy and secure in school, and know what to do if they have any concerns about their well-being.

8. Overall effectiveness

St Catherine's Primary School and Nursery Unit 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. There is a need to conduct a risk assessment of the access arrangements on the junior school site.
2. There is a need to conduct a risk assessment of the access arrangements to the year three mobile classroom.
3. Four of the classrooms do not have vision panels in the doors.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2016

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the ETI website: www.etini.gov.uk