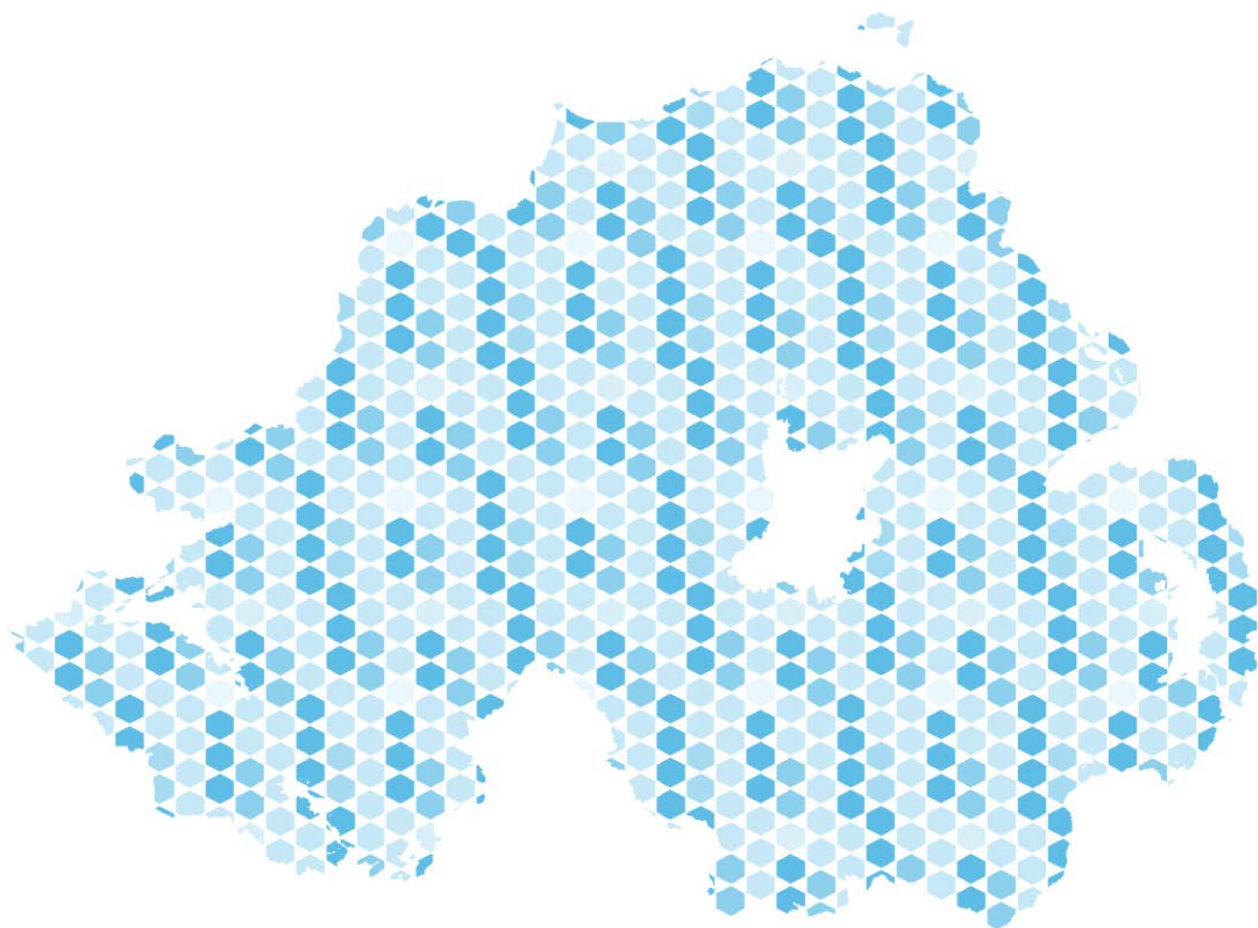


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Columba's Primary School,
Straw, County Derry

Maintained, co-educational

Report of an Inspection in
October 2016



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

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 Achievements 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 a confidential questionnaire.

Seventy-seven percent of parents and a majority of the staff responded to the confidential questionnaires. Overall, the responses to the parental questionnaire signified very high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the life and work of the school. In the written comments, the parents expressed their unanimous appreciation of the vibrant, child-centred and community ethos of the school, the range of learning opportunities and levels of support provided for the children, and the approachability and professionalism of the principal and the entire staff team. The responses to the staff questionnaire were wholly positive; they emphasised the whole school team approach to school improvement and the energetic, inclusive and transforming leadership of the principal. 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.

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 numeracy (including how the school is addressing low attainment and underachievement where applicable);
- quality of provision for learning with a particular focus on numeracy; and
- quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

St Columba's Primary School is situated in the village of Straw, near Draperstown in County Derry. Most of the children attending the school come from the village and the surrounding rural area. The enrolment has increased steadily over the past four years, rising further recently due to the intake of children following the closure of nearby Altayeskey Primary School. The percentage of children entitled to free school meals and the proportion requiring additional help with aspects of their learning have fluctuated slightly over the past four years.

Since the last inspection, St Columba's has moved to a new school building on a new site and a new principal was appointed in November 2014. The school is functioning above capacity with one class base operating in a shared resource area. At the time of the inspection, there was an acting vice-principal and two temporary members of staff.

St Columba's Primary School	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Enrolment	157	158	159	186
% School attendance	96.7	96.3	96.3	N/A
% NI Primary school average	95.6	95.4	N/A	N/A
FSME Percentage ¹	17.19	16.14	17.79	15.59
No. of children on SEN register	29	26	35	23
% of children on SEN register	18.47	16.77	21.47	15.1
No. of children with statements of educational need	*	*	5	5

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

N/A not available

4. Overall findings of the inspection

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

5. Achievements and standards

- The children, including those requiring additional support, achieve very good standards overall in numeracy. In the foundation stage, the children apply their early mathematical knowledge well within the play-based learning. By year 7, the children are able to solve mathematical problems systematically and have a thorough understanding of key mathematical concepts across all areas of the mathematics curriculum.
- Throughout the school, the children engage with enthusiasm in mental mathematics activities and work very well both independently and in pairs and groups, in practical, investigative mathematical lessons. In all key stages, the children use information and communication technology (ICT) with confidence and ease to support, extend and exhibit their mathematical learning.

6. Provision for learning

- The highly effective and well-integrated planning, teaching and assessment brings about progression and challenge in the children's learning and promotes consistency across the school. Most of the lessons observed were very good and outstanding in extending the children's learning. The teachers connect creatively the children's learning with other aspects of the curriculum and build

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

new concepts meaningfully through active learning tasks. They work closely and effectively with the classroom assistants in broadening the children's range of learning experiences, including the opportunities to apply and extend their skills in the outdoor environment. Through the staff's effective analysis of assessment data and other relevant information, the children who require additional support are identified promptly: individually tailored support is put in place and monitored carefully for impact. The staff are highly skilled and conscientious in meeting the children's varying needs, bringing about continuous progression in their learning and all-round development.

- The children benefit from a wide range of well-conceived and well-resourced mathematical experiences across the curriculum, which develop their confidence and aptitude in mathematics. A particular strength is the provision of learning experiences set in a meaningful context, which support the children in developing their understanding of the relevance and application of mathematics in real-life situations. The taught curriculum is enriched by a calendar of events and competitions which promote further the children's enjoyment of and motivation to learn mathematics.
- The provision for pastoral care in the school is outstanding. From an early stage, the children take on responsibilities, developing resilience and a 'have-a-go' attitude. Through the school- and Eco- councils, the children develop leadership and decision-making skills and are consulted regularly as valued contributors to school improvement.

7. Leadership and management

- The inspiring and transforming senior leadership, the board of governors, the parents and the local community work proactively and strategically to secure continuous improvement in all aspects of the school's provision. The collegial team structures and the staff's interdependent roles and responsibilities focus tirelessly on bringing benefit for the children's learning experiences and attainment.
- The school development plan, and the associated action plans, have been informed by rigorous self-evaluation and provide clear strategic direction for continuous school improvement. The staff use effectively the school's internal data and all other sources of first-hand evidence to inform, monitor and evaluate the quality of provision and the children's standards across the whole school.
- The staff have benefitted from recent and relevant professional development opportunities: there is clear evidence of positive impact on the quality of the provision for the children. There is helpful, regular communication with parents and the Parent Teachers' Association (PTA) support generously the work of the school.
- 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 very knowledgeable about learning in the primary phase and understand well the changing needs of the local community; as a result, the governors carry out their challenge function thoroughly and constructively in the best interests of 'their school rooted in the community'.

- 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 years 5, 6 and 7 reported that they feel safe and secure in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their well-being.

8. Overall effectiveness

St Columba's Primary School has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interests of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.

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