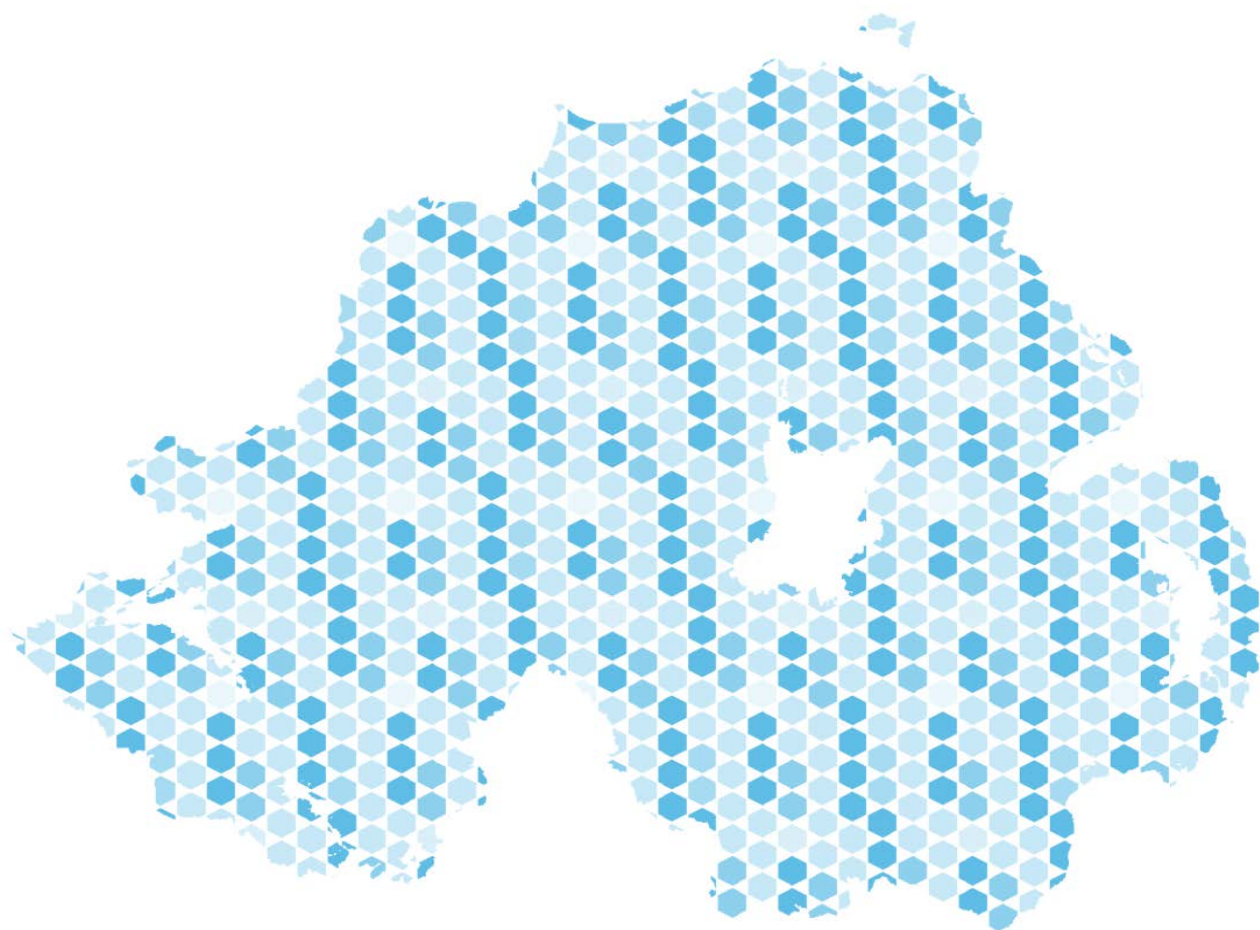


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Francis' Primary School,
Aghaderg, County Down

Report of an Inspection in
April 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.

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	4
8. Overall effectiveness	5

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.eti.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 year 6 and year 7 children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete confidential questionnaires.

Approximately thirty per cent of the parents and almost all of the staff responded to the questionnaire. The responses to the parental questionnaire indicated high levels of satisfaction with many aspects of the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted how happy their children are at the school and they acknowledged the professionalism and commitment of the staff. The staff questionnaire responses were very positive, in particular, they emphasised the collegiality of the staff, the child-centred focus and caring ethos within the school. The governors expressed their appreciation of the hard work and dedication of the principal and the staff and, their commitment to the children. The ETI has reported to the principal and representatives of the board of governors all findings emerging from 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;
- quality of provision for learning in the school; and
- quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

St. Francis' Primary School is a maintained school located in the Parish of Aghaderg, County Down. The children attending the school come from the village of Loughbrickland and surrounding rural area.

St Francis' Primary School	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Enrolment	153	156	165	171
% School attendance	95.8	96.5	97	96.8
% NI Primary school average	94.9	95.6	95.4	N/A
FSME Percentage ¹	11	17	19	19
No. of children on SEN register	30	30	27	29
% of children on SEN register	18	18	16	17
No. of children with statements of educational need	*	*	*	*
No. of newcomer children	*	*	*	*

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

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

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are friendly, courteous and they respond well to the staff's high expectations; they have high levels of motivation and take pride in their work. When provided with the opportunity, in the majority of the classes, they work well individually, in pairs and in groups, and show increasingly high levels of independence and maturity as they progress through the school. Almost all of the children settle quickly to their work and their behaviour is exemplary both in class and as they move around the school; they are respectful towards their peers and the staff and engage very well with visitors to the school.
- The school's performance data shows that in English nearly all of the children make progress in line with their ability or above expectation; in mathematics most of the children make progress in line with their ability or above expectation.
- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are making progress, most are working in line with their ability and reach the standards of which they are capable.
- In key stage (KS) 1 and 2, the children have very good talking and listening skills and engage competently in class and group discussions. Throughout the school, the children develop a very good range of reading strategies, and, by the end of KS 2, the most able children read with enjoyment, appropriate intonation, fluency and understanding of the text. The children write in a variety of forms across the curriculum and produce writing of a very good standard.

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

- In KS1 and 2, the children have very positive attitudes to mathematics; they engage well with practical and mental mathematical activities. Throughout the school, almost all of the children progress well in their knowledge and understanding of key mathematical concepts across all areas of the mathematics curriculum. By year 7, the most able children show flexibility in their thinking, use an appropriate range of strategies to solve mathematical problems and apply effectively their knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts to real-life situations.
- The children are developing high levels of competency in using information and communication technology (ICT) to record, present and share their work with others.

6. Provision for learning

- The staff have developed a common approach to the planning process across the school; they plan effectively for learning and teaching within the classroom; the planning is detailed and indicates systematic progression in the children's learning. The staff make effective use of the school's performance data and insightful evaluations to inform better future learning and teaching. The recent focus on developing appropriate differentiation and effective use of questioning within their planning is having a positive impact on developing the children's thinking skills.
- In the most effective practice, in a majority of the lessons, the teachers set the learning in real-life, meaningful contexts; there is appropriate pace and challenge and the work is matched well to the children's interests and abilities. In the less effective practice, in a minority of lessons, the focus is on the completion of activities rather than the process for learning; there is over-direction by the teachers and there are missed opportunities to develop the children's learning, thinking skills and oral responses.
- In KS1 and 2, the children identified with requiring additional support with aspects of their learning are integrated fully within the class and their specific learning needs are addressed through well differentiated activities. The individual education plans are focused clearly on the specific needs of the children and are assessed robustly and monitored by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO). It will be important that the staff in the foundation stage use the information provided through the transition process to identify the potential learning needs of the children, as early as possible, in order to allow appropriate intervention strategies to be applied to meet the children's differing needs in their early years.
- Literacy is promoted effectively across the curriculum and is integrated very well with other areas of learning. Nearly all of the teachers provide a stimulating learning environment for literacy which promotes the children's interest in reading and writing, and develops their thinking skills. The staff have adopted a systematic and progressive approach to the development of the children's reading and writing and they have implemented successfully a wide variety of highly effective teaching and learning strategies.

- Nearly all of the children experience a broad and progressive programme for mathematics across the school. The key aspects of the mathematics curriculum are covered with sufficient frequency to support the development of the children's knowledge and understanding. The numeracy lessons are for the most part challenging, enjoyable and meet well the children's individual learning needs with "challenge areas" in the classrooms helping to extend their learning.
- The programme for play-based learning, in the foundation stage, requires significant improvement to ensure progression in the children's learning through appropriate informal experiences supported by a more extensive range of resources.
- The school provides a positive and nurturing learning environment for the children in which they are central, valued and enabled to achieve their best. There are excellent working relationships between the children and staff; they are highly committed to the academic and pastoral needs of the children. The children's views and opinions are valued and listened to and, where appropriate, acted upon. They make meaningful contributions to life and work of the school, for example, when the older children read to the younger children and guide them in their use of ICT and involvement in the active school- and Eco- councils. The children are very proud of their school and take on roles and responsibilities with maturity.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy-eating and physical activity through both the curriculum and the provision of extra-curricular activities that enrich the children's experience and develops well their interests, confidence to encourage them to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership and management of the school promote a collegial approach to the work of the school and are very effective. There is a shared vision for school improvement and clear direction for future developments of the school's provision.
- The school improvement process is linked to a well-conceived school development plan (SDP) that has involved appropriate consultation with key stakeholders². The priorities of the SDP focus appropriately on improving further the quality of the children's learning experiences and the standards that they attain. The co-ordinators provide highly effective strategic leadership. They lead well their respective areas of responsibility and provide skilled support for the staff.
- The governors have a very good understanding of their purpose and role within the school; they collaborate effectively with the principal and challenge the progress of the actions which are carried out in the implementation of the school development plan. Based on the evidence presented at the time of the inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated.

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

- 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.
- The group of year 6 children, who spoke to the inspectors, report that they feel safe and happy in school and, that concerns are dealt with effectively by the staff. They are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.

8. Overall effectiveness

St Francis' 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.

© 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