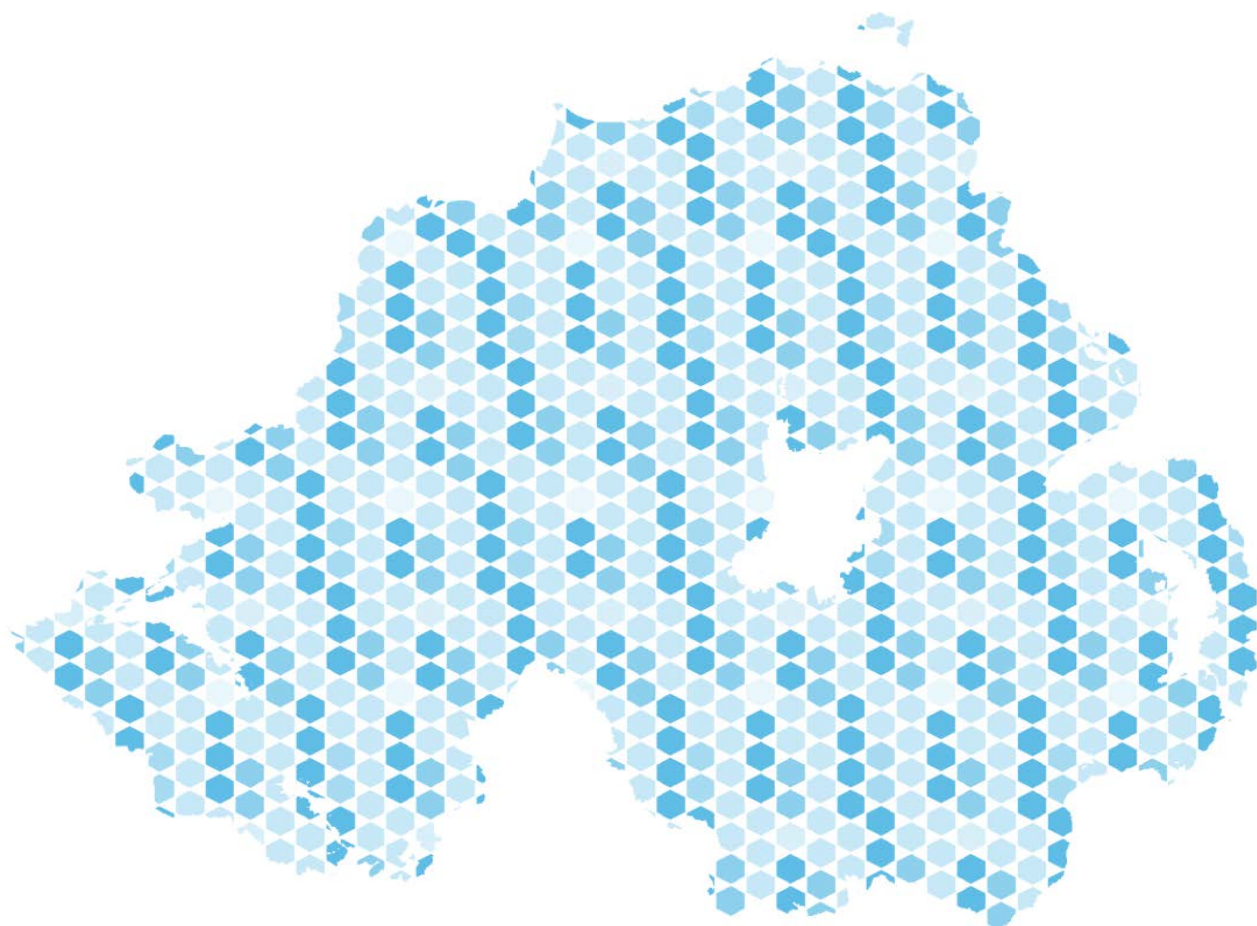


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Malachy's Primary School,
Armagh City

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.

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

Fourteen percent of parents and 41% of staff responded to the confidential questionnaires. The responses to the confidential parental questionnaire indicated very high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, parents highlighted the school's welcoming ethos, the quality of the pastoral care of the children, the manner in which the school supports their children's learning, and the range of extra-curricular activities and planned learning experiences for the children. The responses by the staff to the confidential questionnaire were wholly positive; they emphasised the child-centred provision and the dedication of the staff to the educational and personal development of the children. The ETI has reported to the principal and a representative from the board of governors the responses from the confidential 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 Malachy's Primary School is a maintained primary school situated in the centre of Armagh City and is located within St Patrick's Cathedral Parish. Almost all of the children attending the school come from the surrounding urban area. The school is annually oversubscribed for entry into year 1 and applies admissions criteria; consequently, the enrolment has remained at full capacity over the past four years. The percentage of children entitled to free school meals has fluctuated during the same period and the proportion requiring additional help with aspects of their learning has risen moderately.

While the school does not have formal shared education links with other schools across the community, it is involved in educational collaboration with a nearby integrated primary school.

St Malachy's Primary School	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Enrolment	198	206	207	211
% School attendance	94.1	94.9	95.5	N/A
% NI Primary school average	94.9	95.6	95.4	N/A
FSME Percentage ¹	31	41	39	39
No. of children on SEN register	34	35	41	42
% of children on SEN register	17	17	20	20
No. of children with statements of educational need	*	5	7	8
No. of newcomer children	35	38	42	36

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 polite, friendly and open; they speak with confidence and are articulate when talking to one another and adults. They engage with enthusiasm in a range of meaningful and challenging activities. The children take pride in taking part in noteworthy learning projects and competitions, at local and national levels, during and outside normal school hours. They develop well their skills in listening, thinking, planning, working with others, problem solving and designing as they progress through the school. They are able to apply their learning in literacy and numeracy across other areas of the curriculum, especially within the high quality arrangements for science and information and computer technology (ICT).
- The school's internal 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 in line with their ability or above expectation; a significant minority achieve above expectation. The majority of the children, including those who require additional support in aspects of their learning, make progress in mathematics and achieve in line with their ability or above expectation.

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

- The children engage readily with their peers and with adults, posing questions and explaining their thinking. They are keen to present their ideas and write for a range of audiences and purposes; a particular strength, is the children's creativity and expression when writing in a variety of styles. By year 7, the most able children are fluent and expressive readers who enjoy and understand a variety of texts. Across the key stages, the children's work is presented to a very high standard in their books and in the creative displays.
- The children complete calculations with good levels of accuracy and develop flexibility in applying mental mathematics strategies to solve problems. By year 7, the most able children demonstrate a sound knowledge and understanding of key concepts across the mathematics curriculum. The school has appropriately identified the need to close the gap between the children's attainment in mathematics and their higher attainment in literacy. The teachers work collaboratively and have implemented actions to bring about improvement in the standards attained by the children in mathematics. This work is having a positive effect on the outcomes for the children.
- The children experience a well-balanced and progressive ICT programme which develops well their creativity during the highly effective cross curricular and extra-curricular programmes and links with the Armagh Multimedia Arts (AMMA) Centre.

6. Provision for learning

- There is comprehensive long-term and medium-term planning which provides for progression in the children's learning across all areas of the curriculum. The short-term planning is effective and sufficiently detailed to guide the children's learning during well-structured, engaging lessons. The plans are informed by: robust and reflective evaluations of the children's learning by the teachers; skilful monitoring of the children's progress in their learning; and the appropriate use of assessment information. The school is appropriately developing further the planning for play-based learning and aspects of the mathematics programme to meet the wide range of individual learning styles and educational needs.
- Almost all of the lessons observed were effective in progressing the children's learning; the quality of learning and teaching in one-quarter of the lessons seen was outstanding. In the most effective practice, there is appropriately differentiated teaching which addresses very well the individual needs of each child. Key strengths of the teaching include the meaningful connection of the children's learning across the curriculum, differentiated learning activities and excellent integration of ICT to enhance learning. The teachers' skilful interaction in lessons enables the children to build upon their ideas, organise their thinking and extend their answers.
- The provision for the children identified as requiring assistance with aspects of their learning is very good. The clear and concise targets within the individual education plans enable the teachers to address the children's pastoral and academic needs, and measure their progress. The whole-school approach to engaging the children in their learning and raising their standards in literacy, coupled with the highly effective classroom interventions and support from classroom assistants, is successfully enabling the children to extend further their literacy skills. The school has appropriately implemented a number of purposeful

and innovative strategies to support the children's learning in mathematics. These very effective intervention programmes blend the skills of the classroom teacher, literacy and numeracy support teachers and classroom assistants to improve the children's understanding through in-class support and withdrawal sessions.

- There is a well-planned, systematic and coherent approach to the acquisition and development of the children's literacy skills and knowledge about language. The teachers provide well-planned opportunities for the children to develop skills in talking, listening, reading and writing, in conjunction with thinking skills and personal capabilities. The quality of the children's group work, self-management and resilience to persevere and complete tasks are key strengths within the provision. The children have extensive opportunities to discuss and debate issues which affect them and write creatively in a number of forms, for a variety of purposes and audiences, across the curriculum.
- In mathematics, the children access a wide range of meaningful activities with an increasing emphasis on mental mathematics, problem-solving and investigations. The teachers make very good use of a range of practical resources to develop the children's use of mathematical language, extend their thinking and consolidate their knowledge. The progressive integration of ICT in the numeracy provision is used effectively to support the children in acquisition of new skills in mathematics and to reinforce their learning. The children show a high level of engagement in, and enjoyment of, their mathematical activities and develop a positive attitude to their numeracy.
- There is a caring, supportive ethos in the school, which underpins the inclusive environment for learning. Coupled with the extensive before and after-school programmes, the highly effective pastoral care arrangements are a significant strength of the school's provision and enhance the children's educational and social experiences. The promotion and reward of positive behaviour develops well the children's self-esteem, encouraging them to achieve at high levels. Their views are heard through the effective work of the school council and the Eco-council, and inform the school's development planning.
- The school promotes very well healthy eating and physical activity through the healthy breaks initiative and the wide range of curricular and extra-curricular activities, thereby encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The senior leaders and co-ordinators are an effective team with a shared vision. They have forged extensive links both within the school and with the wider community which incorporate high quality pastoral care and learning experiences for the children. The co-ordinators lead their areas of responsibility very well, monitoring effectively the actions for improvement in consultation with the whole staff.

- The high quality school development plan² has been formed through comprehensive consultation with the teachers, children, parents and governors. The professional development of the staff is closely aligned to the priorities for school improvement. There is an effective whole-school culture of reflection leading to improvement. The action plans are well-informed by pertinent and concise co-ordinator reports that are highly effective in guiding the school improvement work.
- The parents and carers are informed regularly about their children's progress. The school makes good use of links with the parents association, local facilities and organisations to enhance the school provision and the quality of the children's learning experiences during for example e-safety information evenings. There are well-established informal links with local pre-school settings and with several post-primary schools which help the children make the transition into year 1 and into post-primary education. The school has identified the need to transfer more attainment information during the transition to post-primary schools.
- 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 highly effective and very knowledgeable about their school and the standards the children attain. They involve themselves actively in the life and work of the school and are highly strategic in developing further particular aspects of the provision. The governors carry out their support and challenge functions appropriately in the interests of all of the children.
- 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.

8. Overall effectiveness

St Malachy's 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.

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

Accommodation

1. The school has insufficient library provision due to the lack of space.
2. The small size of the classrooms, particularly in the foundation stage, restricts play and practical activities.
3. The lack of storage in many classrooms restricts the children's ability to make choices of resources for learning.
4. Space for on-site car parking is very limited.

Health and safety

1. There are no security locks for access to the mobile classrooms.
2. The internal classroom doors have high-level frosted glass vision panels.

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