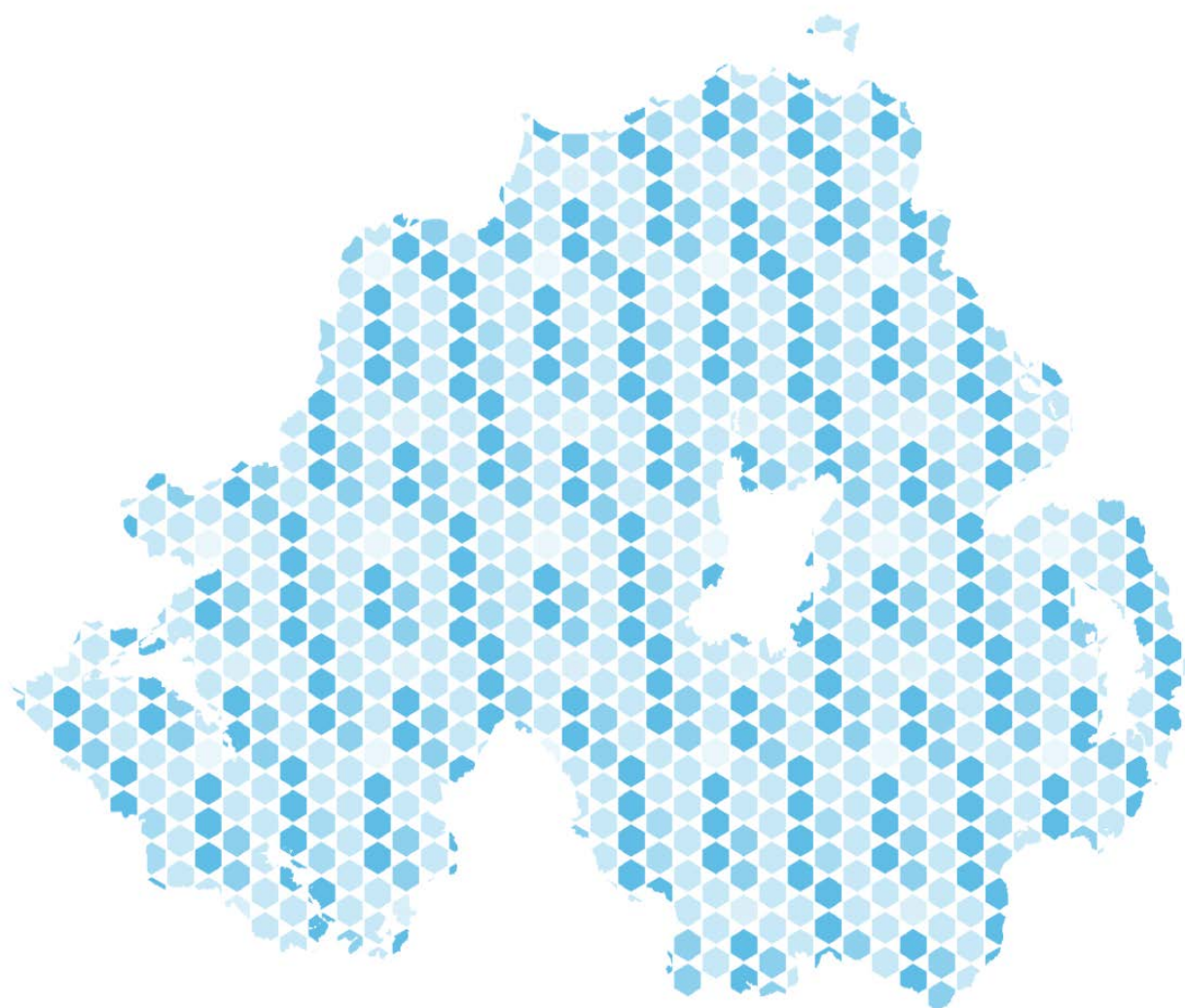


PRIMARY INSPECTION 2015-16



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Mary's Primary School,
Cookstown, County Tyrone

Report of an Inspection in
September 2015

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

Fifteen percent of parents and fifty percent of staff responded to the questionnaires. The responses to the parental questionnaires indicated very high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted their appreciation of the high standard of pastoral care for the children, the hard working and committed staff, the leadership of the principal and the high standing of the school in the local community. Almost all of the teaching staff completed questionnaires and were positive about almost all aspects of the life and work of the school. The ETI has reported to the principal and representatives of the board of governors the main issues 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 Mary's Primary School is a maintained primary school in the Parish of Kildress, in the town land of Dunamore near Cookstown in County Tyrone. The children attending the school come mainly from the surrounding and wider rural area. The enrolment has risen steadily over the last four years. The percentage of children entitled to free school meals and the proportion requiring additional help with aspects of their learning have both decreased over the same period.

St Mary's Primary School	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Enrolment	181	187	189	191
% School attendance	95.4	96.7	96.2	96.5
% NI Primary school average	94.9	95.6	N/A	N/A
FSME Percentage ¹	34	34	32	29
No. of children on SEN register	31	30	28	16
% of children on SEN register	17	16	15	8.4
No. of children with statements of educational need	1	0	0	1
No. of newcomer children	0	0	0	0

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	Outstanding

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are courteous, happy and well-motivated learners; they engage readily with their peers and are respectful towards the staff and visitors to the school. They settle quickly to their learning and respond positively to the activities provided by their teachers. Their work is presented to a high standard and is celebrated in attractive displays around the school. At key stage (KS) 2, children take on a variety of roles and responsibilities in the school with confidence and pride.
- The school's performance data shows that almost all of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make progress in English in line with or above expectation. In mathematics, most of the children, including those who require additional support, make progress in line with or above expectation.
- Across the school, the children enjoy their learning and almost all contribute confidently to whole-class and group discussions. As they progress through the school, they share and discuss their ideas with increasing maturity and listen respectfully and respond sensitively to the views of others. From an early age, the children show a positive attitude towards and interest in books, using a range of strategies to support their reading. During the inspection, the year 7 children read with fluency and expression and shared their knowledge of a range of authors. In the foundation stage, the younger children engage readily in pre-writing activities and can express their views and ideas about a range of topics; as they progress they can write about themselves and their own experiences. In KS 1 and KS 2, the children write with increasing accuracy and awareness of audience and purpose.

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

- The children in the foundation stage are developing and increasing their confidence in investigating mathematics within their environment. As they progress through the school, they demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of key mathematical concepts and can apply these to real-life contexts across the curriculum. The children in year 7 expressed their enjoyment of mathematics and almost all of the children demonstrated a high level of mathematical flexibility and could explain their thinking using the appropriate mathematical language.
- The children use information and communication technology (ICT) with increasing confidence and complete a range of tasks which allow them to develop their thinking skills and personal capabilities. They use a range of devices to enhance their learning and develop their creativity.

6. Provision for learning

- Most of the lessons observed were effective in promoting and progressing the children's learning. In these lessons, the teachers built successfully on the children's prior learning, the activities were well matched to the children's needs and interests and they were given time and support to reflect on and develop their responses. While the teachers apply a consistent approach to planning across the school, they demonstrate flexibility in their teaching in order to respond to the needs and interests of the children.
- The inclusive learning environment supports very well those children who require additional support with aspects of their learning. The individual education plans contain specific, measurable targets which guide accurately the teachers in their work with the children. Through rigorous tracking of the children's progress, appropriate, short-term intervention programmes for both literacy and numeracy are put in place to address potential barriers to learning. The school has identified correctly the need to continue to monitor and develop further aspects of the provision. The classroom assistants work in close partnership with the teachers to provide skilful, sensitive in-class support.
- The whole-school programmes for literacy and numeracy are comprehensive; they provide a clear line of development and progression and inform well the teachers' planning. A key feature of the provision is the focus on developing the children's literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.
- Reading is given a high priority throughout the school; the recently refurbished reading centre provides a stimulating environment and the children have access to a wide range of fiction and non-fiction books. The teachers make skilful use of story books and class novels to stimulate discussion and develop the children's writing. In the most effective practice, the teachers develop the children's talking and listening skills through effective questioning and well-planned group and paired work activities.

- The teachers plan a varied range of practical mathematical activities which appeal to the children's interests and stage of development. In the foundation stage, a range of natural and authentic items are used very well to consolidate learning. Across the school, mental mathematics strategies are used well to develop the children's mathematical thinking and agility. The recent focus on developing the children's understanding of problem solving and mathematical language is having a positive impact on the learning and teaching in these areas.
- The quality of pastoral care is outstanding. This provision is characterised by the child-centred ethos, the very good working relationships between the staff and the children, a well-delivered preventative education curriculum and the effective engagement with external agencies to meet the needs of all the children. The children's social and emotional development is given a high priority and their achievements are recognised and celebrated. Through the student council, the children undertake important roles and responsibilities and contribute meaningfully to the improvement of their school. The wide range of after-schools clubs and educational visits enhances the quality of the children's overall learning experiences and contributes significantly to their personal development.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, through the effective implementation of a healthy eating policy and a wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The principal, supported by the governors, has instigated a positive school improvement agenda in recent years and promotes a collegial approach to the work of the school. The senior leadership team is committed to meeting the individual needs of all the children and to raising further the standards they achieve.
- The priorities for improvement set out in the comprehensive school development plan are informed by a rigorous process of self-evaluation. The associated action plans are clearly focused on improving further the quality of the learning experiences provided for, and the standards achieved by, the children.
- The co-ordinators are skilled in monitoring and evaluating the provision for learning and standards within and across their areas of responsibility; they share willingly their specialist knowledge with their colleagues to support them in their work. Effective use is made of teacher observations and a wide range of performance data to identify low and underachievement to track the progress of individual children.
- The school works in partnership with the parents regarding their children's learning and values the contribution of the wider community to the life and work of the school. There are very effective links with relevant post-primary schools to ensure better transitions for the children. The school has identified appropriately the need to develop further the existing links with the feeder pre-schools and to review the settling-in arrangements for year one children.

- 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 governors are very well informed and engaged actively in the life and work of the school. They have a well-developed strategic overview of the school and understanding of the school's place within the local and wider 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 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

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.

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