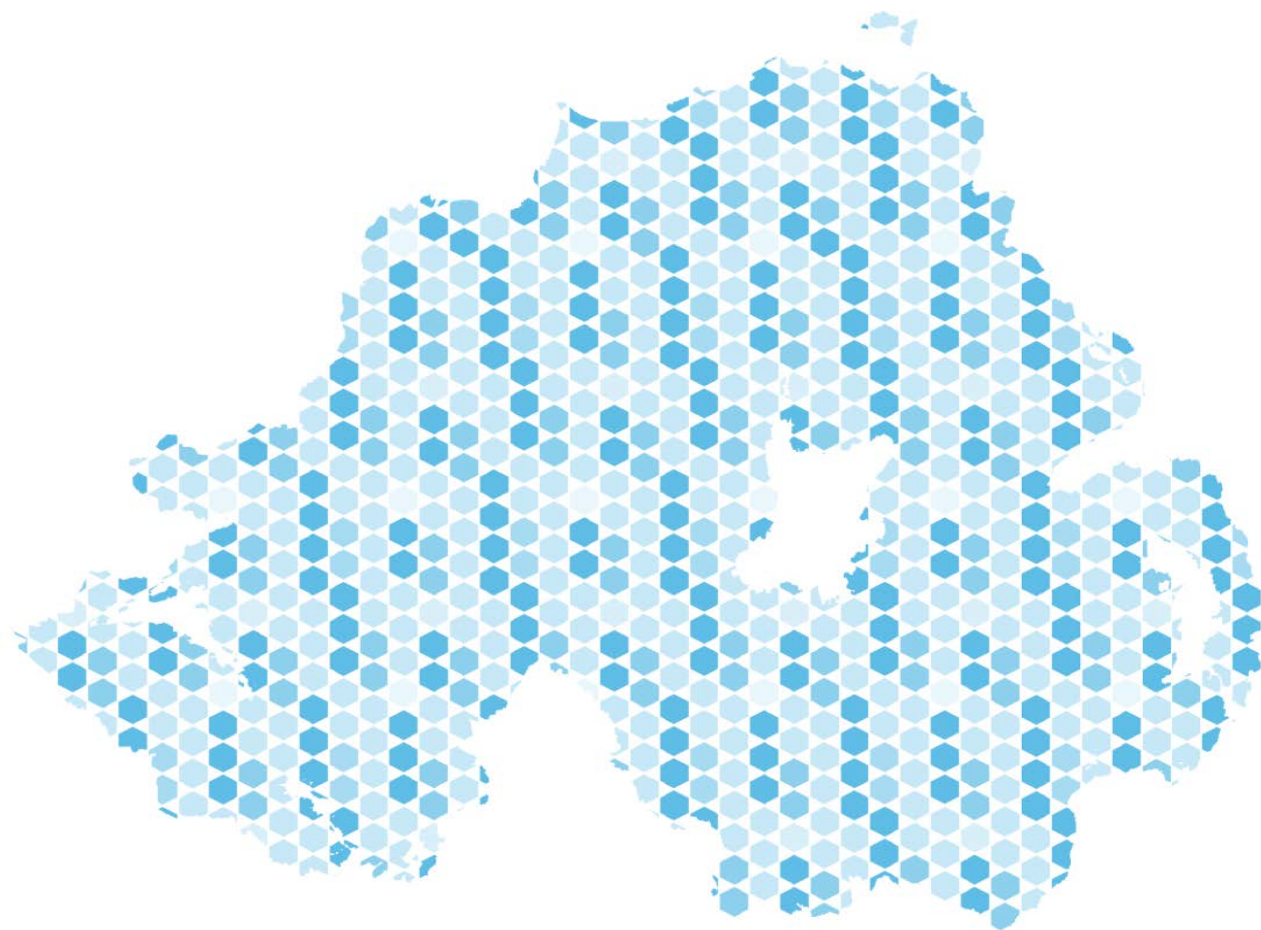


PRIMARY INSPECTION 2015-16



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Matthew's Primary School,
Belfast

Report of an Inspection in
November 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.

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	5
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 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.

Two percent of parents and 44 percent of staff (teaching and non-teaching) responded to the questionnaires. The responses to the parental questionnaires indicated very high levels of satisfaction with most aspects of the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted their appreciation of, the helpful and regular information that they receive about their child's learning, the good progress that their child is making and how much their child enjoys learning at the school. The staff who completed the questionnaires were wholly positive about the majority of their involvement in the life and work of the school. In particular they highlighted the inclusive, welcoming and pastoral ethos that the school demonstrates for all members of the school community. The ETI has reported to the principal and a representative of the board of governors the main messages 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 outcomes 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 Matthew's Primary School is situated on an interface in the Short Strand area of East Belfast. The current school opened in 1995, continuing a tradition of education in St Matthew's Parish which began in 1846. Most of the children come from the immediate area and walk or cycle to school. At the time of the inspection, the percentage of children entitled to free school meals had remained steady, and the percentage of the children who have been identified by the school as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning had decreased. One fifth of the children are newcomers.

St Matthew's Primary School and Nursery Unit	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Enrolment	266	268	276	284
% School attendance	92.9	94.6	93.6	96.1
% NI Primary school average	94.9	95.6	N/A	N/A
FSME Percentage ¹	65.7	67.4	66.4	66.8
No. of children on SEN register	77	66	40	62
% of children on SEN register	28.9	24.8	14.6	22
No. of children with statements of educational need	9	3	7	6
No. of newcomer children	28	38	47	55

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

N/A not available

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Achievements and standards	Good
Provision for learning	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Nursery Unit	Good

5. Achievements and standards

- The school places an emphasis on respect; in particular, the children's respect for themselves as individuals, amongst peers and towards the staff and the school. This value reflects well in the children who are settled, well-mannered, engage readily with their peers and are welcoming to visitors to the school. From an early age, the children develop in confidence as they are encouraged to take on a variety of roles and responsibilities including presenting their work in class on behalf of their group and engaging in the many extra-curricular opportunities provided in the school.
- The school's performance data indicates that most of the children make progress in English and mathematics in line with their ability and a significant minority make progress above expectation. Low and under-achievement are identified early and are addressed by a range of appropriate intervention strategies.
- In numeracy the children engage well with practical activities and, from an early age, enjoy working in pairs and groups to complete investigative, problem-solving tasks.

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

- Across the key stages, most of the children demonstrate good talking and listening skills, contributing confidently to class and group discussions, reading aloud and presenting and sharing their ideas openly with their peers when given the opportunity. From foundation stage (FS), the children develop their ability to write independently and across the school most present their work carefully. The teachers provide age-appropriate and meaningful opportunities for the children to review their own and others' work in order to improve further its quality and accuracy.
- By Year 7, the children produce a good variety of extended writing across a range of genres for different purposes and audiences. The highest achieving children in literacy and numeracy read with high levels of interest and good understanding. In discussions about their reading, they are able to explain more complex words and phrases, to make inferences and to explain and justify their views and talk enthusiastically about the books they read for pleasure. They are flexible in their thinking and use of strategies, and demonstrate a secure understanding of key concepts across the mathematics curriculum.
- The children would benefit from more consistent opportunities to apply their learning in literacy and numeracy across other areas of the curriculum, including the world around us and play-based learning, to raise further the standards they attain and to exploit fully the range of opportunities for the children to develop their communication skills.
- The children in the nursery unit are well settled for the time of year and most of them play purposefully for sustained periods of time. The children are beginning to form friendships and play collaboratively within the role-play and small-world areas, accessing the resources they require with growing independence and gaining in confidence in the nursery routines. They are developing good listening skills; they can recall and retell stories and join in or lead songs and rhymes with great enthusiasm. During the inspection small groups of the children engaged well in early mark making. Most of the children can recognise their name and label their work independently and a number of the children showed a good awareness of counting and measures.

6. Provision for learning

- Most of the learning and teaching observed was good or better. In the best practice, a small number of the lessons observed, the lessons had good pace and challenge, the children were engaged in their learning and the work was underpinned by differentiated planning and supported by positive comments that clearly indicates how children can improve their work further. This highly effective practice needs to be disseminated to further develop a consistent approach to teaching and learning across the school.
- The long-term planning for literacy is an effective systematic framework to guide the teacher's work with the children. Most of the teaching observed was effective or highly effective in developing progressively the children's literacy skills. In the best practice, the teachers provide well-planned, collaborative and independent learning activities, which engage and challenge the children and promote and extend their thinking skills. A more consistent whole school approach to marking for improvement and monitoring the progression in the children's writing would progress the children's learning further.

- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified early and supported well by a wide range of external support agencies, and through small withdrawal groups. In the classrooms, children who experience barriers to their learning are integrated sensitively and, in the best practice, staff work together to provide additional help for individuals and groups of children which impacts positively on their learning. The SENCo is supported by the recently formed special educational needs team who have prioritised the monitoring and evaluation of the existing provision in order to inform future support along with reviewing the targets on the individual education plans to reflect more accurately the progress the children are making.
- The nursery unit provides good quality opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The quality of the staff interactions with the children is consistently good or better. In the best practice, the staff develop well the children's thinking and problem-solving and extend their vocabulary. The programme is planned collaboratively by the staff and detailed evaluations reflect accurately the children's learning and the use of resources. The staff regularly assess the children's learning using specific learning targets for each area of the curriculum. The staff need to develop further the use of observations to ensure that they build up a profile of each child's learning to inform the planning of a programme which meets their individual needs.
- The pastoral care in the school is of a high quality and there is a welcoming, supportive and very inclusive ethos. The children are well behaved and the staff respond to any difficulties in a caring and supportive manner. In the nursery unit in particular, the staff are consistent in their approaches to promoting positive behaviour.
- Across the school the children use a range of digital and programmable devices to enhance their learning and develop their creativity. The school has identified the need to appoint a co-ordinator for information and communication technology (ICT) in order to develop further the integration of ICT across the curriculum and to monitor the progression of ICT in meaningful contexts.
- A particular strength of the school is the close links that it has with the local and wider community. There are frequent opportunities for the children to experience music and drama productions, building confidence as they perform in front of large audiences in Belfast. When surveyed, parents expressed their appreciation for the range of social events and courses provided by the school to enhance their ability to support their own child's learning. Feedback from the survey led to establishing the school council which encourages responsibility while extending the children's voice in the school.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity to encourage children to adopt healthy lifestyles. This includes the healthy break and lunch scheme and a wide range of sporting activities provided both at school and in the wider community.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership and management of the school take close account of and support holistically the development needs of all the children. In the past year the staff have experienced a number of changes in roles and responsibilities as well as the addition of several new staff members. It is timely that the senior leadership of the school has identified the need to define more clearly the roles and responsibilities of the co-ordinators including the need to monitor and evaluate the impact of teaching and learning strategies on the standards the children attain.
- The school development plan has been informed by effective consultation with the children, their parents, staff, governors and members of the community to draw on their views and identify areas for improvement. Effective actions plans linked to the school development plan are now in place for much of the curriculum and this practice needs to be developed more fully for all areas.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The aspects of governance to review are to:
 - exercise further their challenge function; and
 - liaise with the co-ordinators.
- On the basis of the evidence, available at the time of the inspection, the school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The following areas need to be addressed:
 - the report on child protection and safeguarding needs to be minuted on the agenda when the board of governors meet; and
 - the updating of a small number of policies to reflect more fully the practices in the school.
- In discussions with the inspectors, the year 6 children spoke positively about their experiences in school. They reported that they feel safe and secure in school and know what to do if they have any concerns regarding their well-being.

8. Overall effectiveness

The school demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.

The areas for improvement are:

- to develop further the strategic role of the co-ordinators; and
- to develop further the effective use of assessment for learning strategies and disseminate more consistently the good practice within the school.

The ETI will monitor, through district inspection activity, the school's progress on the areas for improvement.

Health and Safety / Accommodation

1. The senior management, the board of governors and the employing authority carried out an internal and external health and safety risk assessment of the school and the following area that has been identified for improvement will need to be addressed:
 - a review of the times that the gates into the school are opened and closed.

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