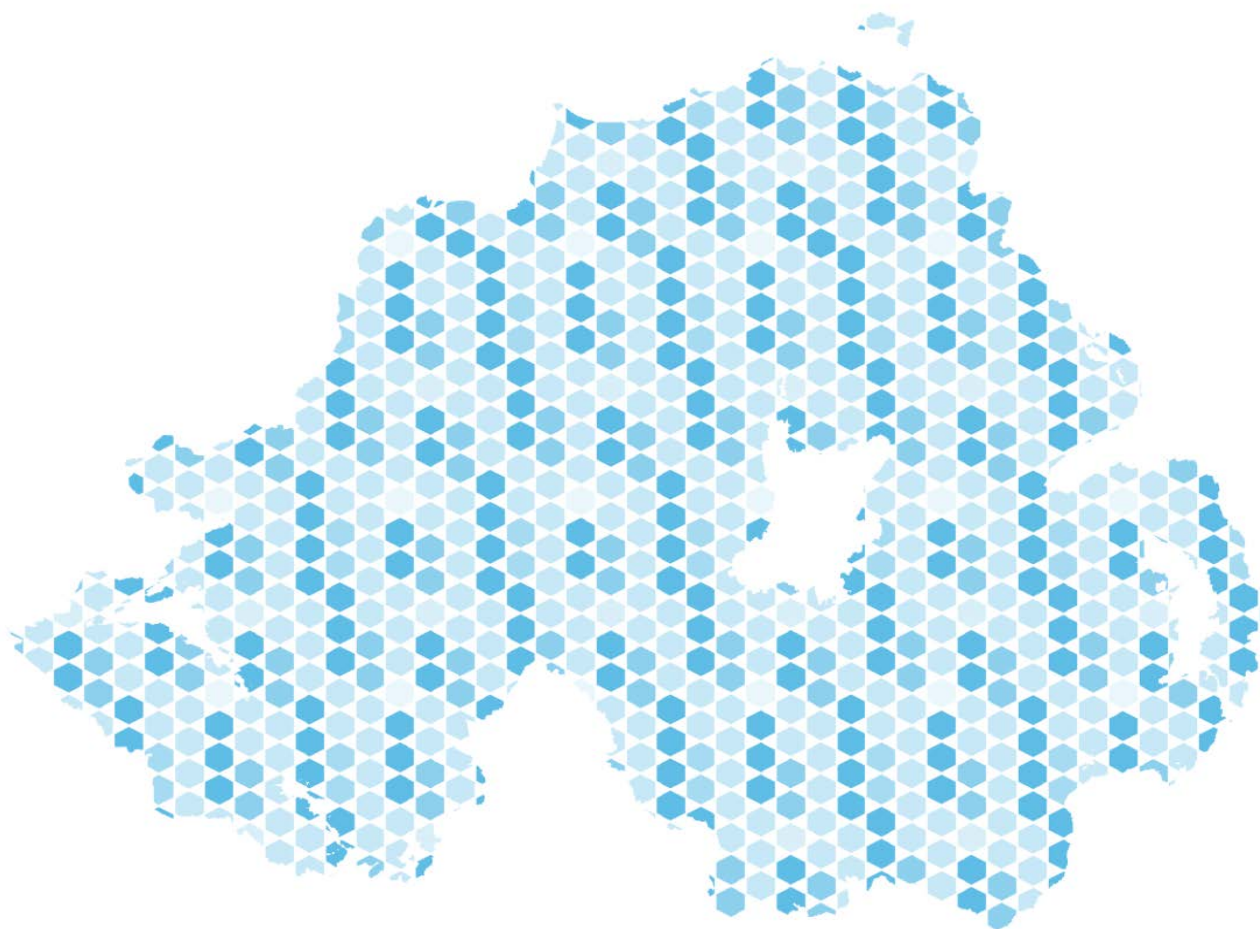


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Patrick's Primary School and  
Nursery Unit, Aghacommon,  
County Armagh

Report of an Inspection in  
May 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.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 children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete confidential questionnaires.

Thirty percent of parents responded to the confidential questionnaire. Almost all of the parents reported that their child enjoys learning and is making good progress. In particular, the parents highlighted: the friendly, approachable staff and the welcoming ethos; the high quality of the pastoral care; and, their satisfaction at the introduction of a wider range of enrichment and after-school activities for the children. Almost all of the staff completed the confidential questionnaire. Their responses were also positive; they emphasised the collegial and family atmosphere, the many opportunities provided for continuing professional development and the productive engagement of the school in its local community. The ETI has reported to the principal and representatives of the board of governors the nature of the small number of issues emerging from the parental and staff 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 in the nursery unit; and
- quality of leadership and management.

## **3. Context**

St Patrick's Primary School and Nursery Unit is situated in the village of Derrymacash, in the townland of Aghacommon, approximately three miles from Lurgan. All of the children come from the village and its surrounding areas. The nursery unit has one full-time session per day and operates at full capacity. The school's enrolment has remained steady over the last four years. In the same period, the percentage of children entitled to free school meals and the proportion of children identified as requiring additional help with aspects of their learning

have also remained steady. The school motto is: 'Together we learn'; this motto is lived out well by the school community as evidenced by the questionnaire returns and the inspection findings. During this academic year, the school has formed a shared education partnership with a local controlled school which has provided the children in year 1 and year 5 with the opportunity to participate in a small number of well-planned learning experiences.

<b>St Patrick's Primary School Aghacommon</b>	<b>2012-13</b>	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2015-16</b>
Enrolment	241	240	240	243
Enrolment in the Nursery Unit	26	26	26	26
% School attendance	96.6	96.9	97.2	N/A
% NI Primary school average	94.9	95.6	95.4	N/A
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	14	17	15	19
No. of children on SEN register	29	26	34	32
% of children on SEN register	12	11	14	13
No. of children with statements of educational need	7	7	*	5
No. of newcomer children	7	10	6	8

**Source:** data as held by the school.

N/A not available

\* fewer than five

#### **4. Overall findings of the inspection**

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Capacity to identify and bring about improvement</b>
<b>Achievements and standards</b>	Good
<b>Provision for learning</b>	Good
<b>Leadership and management</b>	Good
<b>Nursery unit</b>	Very good

#### **5. Achievements and standards**

- The children are highly motivated to learn and settle quickly to their work. From the nursery unit, they develop the necessary skills to work collaboratively and co-operatively with one another, and to talk to their peers about their learning. As a consequence, they work productively in pairs and in small groups. The children show a growing awareness of their role as responsible citizens in society through well-planned practical opportunities to help support those less privileged, both locally and globally, and in support of their local environment.
- The school's performance data shows that most of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make good progress in English and mathematics and achieve at or above expectation.

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

- Throughout the school, the children are confident in expressing their opinions, thoughts and feelings. In group and paired activities they take turns to share ideas and to ask appropriate questions. By year 7, the most able children can justify individual reading preferences and read with good fluency and expression. They show good understanding of the main ideas of texts and of the writer's intended meaning. Overall, the children's writing is of a good standard. From the foundation stage, they develop progressively their independent writing skills and, by year 7, the children can write well in a range of forms for a variety of audiences.
- The children have a positive attitude to mathematics and respond enthusiastically in the planned mental mathematical activities. In most of the lessons, they co-operate freely during practical sessions which extend their mathematical confidence and proficiency. By year 7, the most able children achieve very good standards: in particular, key ideas and processes in number are established firmly with the children having good flexibility in their approach to solving more complex mathematical calculations. Across the key stages, the children's understanding of concepts in shape and space, measurement and handling data is developing well. The children do not have sufficient regular opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge and skills and to pose and solve problems in wider contexts across the curriculum.
- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are making good progress. The school's most recent review shows that most of the children met the targets outlined in their individual education plans. The children who present with social and emotional needs develop important communication and self-management skills through their engagement in appropriately tailored support programmes.
- In the nursery unit, the children engage in sustained, collaborative and purposeful play; they display high levels of independence and are very well behaved. They listen to and participate enthusiastically in stories, action songs and rhymes. The children's fine motor skills are very good and their mark-making and representational drawings are well developed. They have a very good understanding of key mathematical concepts, such as number, measures and positional language and they use mathematical language effectively during play, both indoors and outdoors.
- The children develop useful skills in using information and communication technology (ICT) through their use of a limited range of programmes and programmable devices which enhance their learning.

## **6. Provision for learning**

- The long-term and medium-term planning guides well the work of the teachers and provides the children with access to a broad and balanced range of learning experiences across most areas of the curriculum. The quality of the short-term planning is more variable, with the planning, teaching and assessment being effective at promoting successful learning in most of the lessons observed. In the most effective practice in a minority of the lessons: the work is set in contemporary, real-life contexts which engage and motivate the children; the teacher's effective questioning provides the children with opportunities to articulate and clarify their thinking; the teacher takes sufficient time to use the children's questions and responses as further learning opportunities and to deepen their understanding; and, the work is tailored to provide sufficient challenge for all of the children.

- In the less effective practice, in a minority of the lessons, the intended learning and success criteria are unclear to the children and insufficient cognisance is taken of their prior learning leading to a low level of challenge for the more able children. As a consequence, there is a need for senior leaders and co-ordinators to disseminate more effectively the very good practice in planning, teaching and assessment which exists in the school to improve the consistency in the quality of the children's learning experiences and the standards they attain.
- The needs of the children who require additional support, including the newcomer children, are identified well through regular observation and assessment by the teachers, and by effective consultation with parents and relevant external support services. The nature of the provision is informed well by the analysis of an appropriate range of assessment and pastoral data. The individual education plans guide well the work of the teachers in tailoring the in-class provision to meet the individual needs of the child. These plans have well-defined learning targets which support each child's steady progress and enable them to experience success. The expertise of the classroom assistants is deployed effectively by the class teachers to support and guide the children's social, emotional and academic development. The quality of the withdrawal support is monitored closely by all relevant staff to ensure it is meeting well the needs of each child.
- In the provision for literacy, the teachers' medium planning guides well the children's acquisition and development of communication skills and ensures year on year progression. There are good opportunities for writing across the areas of learning; however, there is a need for more consistency in the teachers' marking to improve the accuracy of the children's written responses. Reading is a priority and the structured approach to the teaching of reading is raising further the children's attainment. The children have insufficient access to a suitable range of literature; in particular, the children would benefit from accessing a wider variety of media texts.
- The younger children are introduced to key mathematical concepts through an engaging variety of effective practical and interactive tasks. In the best practice across the school in a minority of the lessons, the teachers place an appropriate emphasis on developing the children's understanding of mathematics through discussion using the associated mathematical vocabulary. Overall, the children experience a good breadth of learning experiences across the main aspects of mathematics; in particular, the children's understanding and knowledge of number is clearly established. There are good examples of the teachers promoting secure understanding of concepts through varied activities which encourage the children to think flexibly and to apply their prior learning to investigate problems logically. This effective practice needs to be more consistent across all of the classes, including the regular provision of more challenging and open-ended practical investigations to extend the ways in which the children use and justify their mathematical reasoning.
- The nursery staff have created an attractive and well organised environment in which the children's artwork is displayed and celebrated. Their interactions with the children are of very good quality; they treat the children with kindness and respect. The planning is comprehensive and guides well the work of the staff. The staff complete ongoing observations of the children's learning, compile detailed records which include samples and photographs of their work and engage them meaningfully in the planning process which builds on their needs and interests.

- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school including the nursery unit is very good. This is evident in, for example, the welcoming, inclusive ethos where the talents of all of the children are recognised and valued, the well-planned, taught pastoral programme and the strong focus on the promotion and rewarding of positive behaviour. The children's views are sought and acted upon through their participation in the School Council and Eco-club. The extensive range of extra-curricular activities, the many opportunities for the children to represent the school in local and national competitions and the well-planned learning activities with children from the neighbouring controlled school enrich the children's learning experiences.
- The school and nursery unit give very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity through, for example, the 'Healthy Break' initiative, the taught personal development programme and the children's participation in a wide range of sporting activities thereby encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- Through effective and rigorous consultation with all staff, governors, parents and children, the senior leaders have articulated a clear, shared vision for school improvement in the pastoral and curriculum provision underpinned by high expectations for the children and the staff. Over the last two years, since the principal took up post, a number of successful initiatives have been introduced in a timely manner. These initiatives include the review of key school policies to guide more effectively the work of the school and the more effective use of data to inform both classroom practice and withdrawal support, resulting in a significant decrease in the level of underachievement.
- The school development plan<sup>2</sup> is of a good quality. The areas of Art and Design, the World Around Us and Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) have been a focus in this school year to good effect, impacting positively on the quality of the children's learning experiences in these areas. At times, the targets set in the action plans by the co-ordinators are not suitably specific or time bound. The co-ordinators need to include more explicit detail in the action plans to guide more effectively the improvement work and develop further their role in the dissemination of the effective practice in their areas of responsibility.
- The school has developed a comprehensive range of links with the local and wider community which enrich and extend the children's learning. There are effective arrangements in place for consulting with parents, involving them in the work and life of the school and, through annual curriculum information sessions for each year group, developing further their knowledge and skills to support their child's learning. The 'Friends of St Patrick's' committee supports the development work of the school by providing useful additional funds and helpful practical support.

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



- Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are involved willingly in the life and work of the school and have undertaken appropriate training to support them in their work. There is an aspect of governance to review, namely to:
  - monitor more closely the outworking of the action plans associated with the school development plan to ensure actions taken are effective at bringing about the required improvement.
- 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 Patrick's Primary 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, in particular, the need to:

- disseminate more effectively the very good practice in planning, teaching and assessment which exists in the school to improve the consistency in the quality of the children's learning experiences and the standards they attain.

**Health and Safety**

1. A risk assessment of the access arrangements to the mobile classroom needs to be carried out by the school in consultation with the Employing Authority.
2. There are no visibility panels on the classroom doors.

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