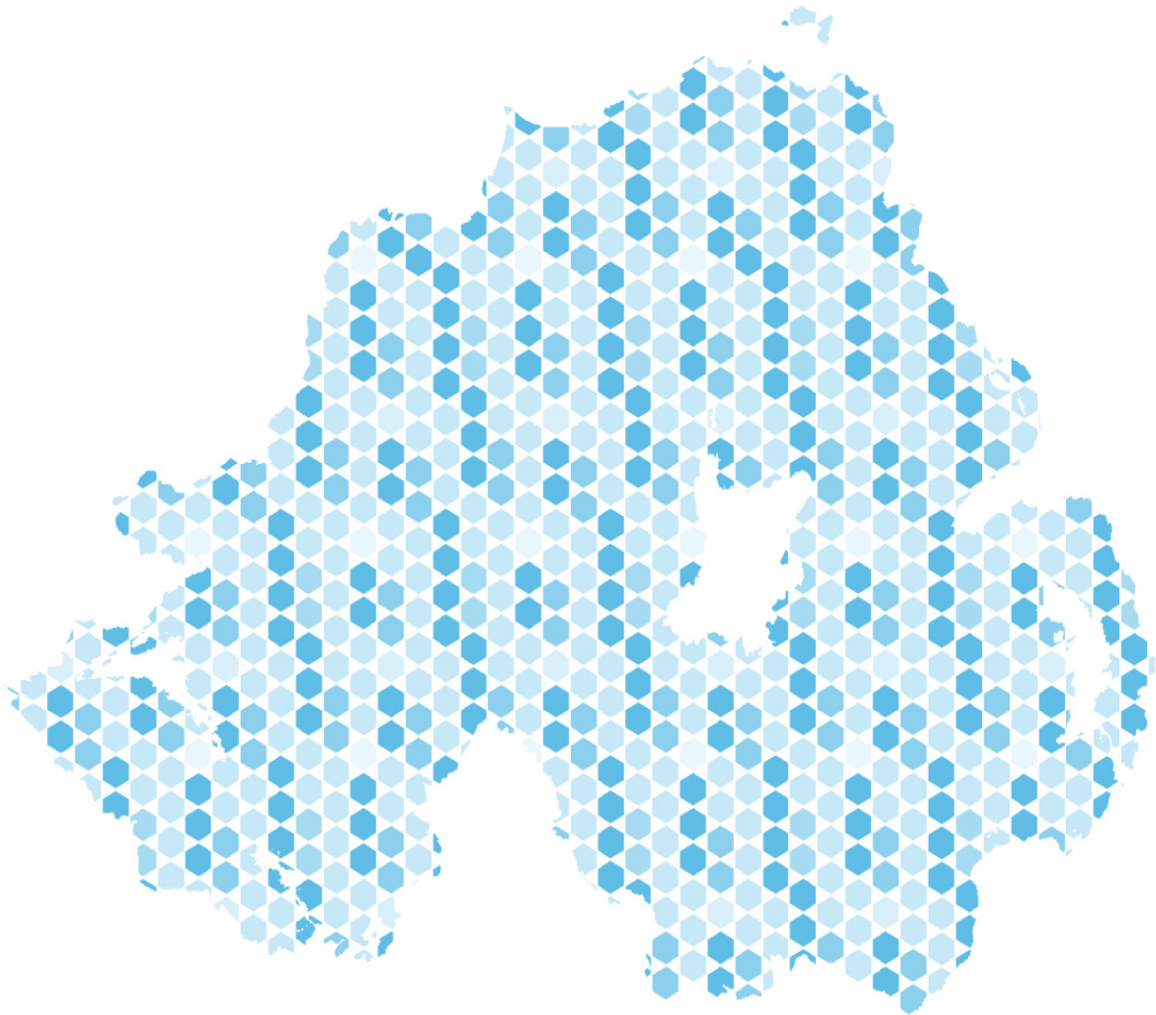


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Clare's Convent Primary  
School, Newry

Report of an Inspection  
in September 2011

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%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

## SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Clare's Convent Primary School is situated close to the centre of Newry. The enrolment has decreased steadily over the last four years from 223 children in 2007 to the current figure of 180. At the time of the inspection, approximately 32% of the children in the school were entitled to free school meals. The school has identified almost 20% of the children as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning and in addition there are 12% of the children for whom English is not their first language.

## FOCUS

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy;
- the quality of provision for learning; and
- the quality of leadership and management including the school's processes for self-evaluation leading to improvement.

## OVERALL FINDING OF THE INSPECTION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is very good and the pastoral care is outstanding. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children, and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

## KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

### Achievements and Standards

The quality of the children's **achievements and standards** is very good. In English and mathematics, most of the children attain standards by the end of key stage 2 which are in line with their ability. To raise the standards of attainment further, the teachers need to ensure there is sufficient challenge and consistent progression in all aspects of the children's learning.

The children identified with **special educational needs** make progress and also reach standards of which they are capable.

The **children** are well-motivated and show very positive dispositions for learning; their behaviour is excellent. They demonstrate high levels of self esteem and take pride in their work. Most can work well both independently and collaboratively on group activities, and they respond very well to the increased opportunities provided to take responsibility as they move through the key stages.

The children achieve excellent standards in their use of **information and communication technology (ICT)**. They clearly enjoy the regular opportunities to use ICT as an integral part of teaching and learning and they make regular contributions to the very informative school website.

### Provision for Learning

The provision for learning is very good.

Despite the considerable age and challenges in the layout of the school **accommodation** the staff makes excellent use of all of the space available. Considerable effort has been made to create a rich and attractive learning environment both indoors and outdoors. The teachers have organised very effectively their classroom environments to ensure that the accessibility of resources promotes the children's independence and self management skills.

The quality of the **teaching** observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding, with most of the lessons being good or better. The teachers are very hard-working and demonstrate through their meticulous preparation and practice, a strong commitment to the education and care of each child. They are generally very well supported by the classroom assistants. Key features of the best teaching observed included effective questioning which elicited extended responses from the children, differentiated group activities focused on appropriate learning outcomes and relating the learning to real life contexts.

The very good systems in places through the use of **assessment** tools are used to track and analyse children's progress both at whole school and individual class level. The teachers use the data, scrutiny of the children's work and class observation to inform the planning and set targets of attainment. In the best practice the marking and classroom assessment strategies help the children to improve their work. This needs to be developed more consistently across all classes.

The provision for **special educational needs** is very good. The children's needs are identified early and a variety of good programmes of support are in place. There is a strong emphasis on addressing the full spectrum of additional needs and barriers to learning which children face. A comprehensive programme of staff development is building the capacity of the staff to meet these needs.

The quality of the arrangements for **pastoral care** is outstanding. This is evident through the excellent working relationships at all levels and the supportive and inclusive ethos developed in the school. In addition the very wide range of extra-curricular experiences provided enhance the quality of the children's overall learning experiences and contribute significantly to their personal development.

The school has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the child protection guidance issued by the Department of Education.

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and provides an excellent range of opportunities for sport and physical activity.

### **Leadership and Management**

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding.

The Principal provides outstanding leadership. She demonstrates an excellent level of professional expertise and sets high expectations of quality for all aspects of school life in the best interests of the children, parents and staff.

She has the full confidence of the whole school community and has led, with her management team, a wide range of successful pastoral, curricular and extra curricular initiatives since her appointment in 2005. The school has been awarded numerous awards in recognition of this work. The effective model of distributed leadership is a particular feature of the school.

The literacy, numeracy, and special educational needs co-ordinators provide very good leadership within their areas of responsibility.

The whole-school **self-evaluation** and **school development planning** processes are excellent. The school makes very effective use of a wide range of data to demonstrate the progress of every child and uses this information to plan for their needs and future development. The culture of reflection and continuous improvement is very well embedded into all aspects of school life. Monitoring and evaluation at all levels is clearly linked to outcomes and staff development.

The Principal and staff have engaged co-operatively on aspects of professional development with another local primary school to prepare for a longstanding proposal for amalgamation. A prompt decision by all interested parties on the plans for such an amalgamation would be in the best interests of the staff, children, parents and wider community.

## **CONCLUSION**

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is very good and the pastoral care is outstanding. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the pupils and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

## BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: St Clare's Convent Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 28/09/11**  
 ii. **School Reference Number: 503-1213** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Short**

B.

School Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Year 1 Intake	30	26	28	17	20
<b>Enrolments</b>					
Primary	223	219	211	203	180
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Special Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Irish Medium Unit	0	0	0	0	0

The enrolment for the current year is the figure on the day of notification of inspection. For previous years it is the figure in the annual return to the Department of Education.

The calculations at C and D should be based on the total of the primary and reception enrolments only.

- C. Average Attendance for the Previous School Year (expressed as a percentage): 92.6% **NI Avg Att: 94.7%**
- Average Attendance for those children on the Special Educational Needs Register: 89%
- |  | Primary & Reception | Nursery Unit | Special Unit | Irish Medium Unit |
|--|---------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
|--|---------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
- D. i. Number of Teachers (including the principal and part-time teachers): 9 0 0 0  
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 19.88 NI PTR: 20.2
- iii. Average Class Size: 25.57
- iv. Class Size (Range): 17 to 32
- v. Ancillary Support:  
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- |   |        |
|---|--------|
| i. Clerical support:  | 47     |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support:           | 30     |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 109.25 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 5%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 19.33%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age:
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 31.66%
- x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2010/11 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics, and Irish (in Irish-medium schools):
- |                |        |                    |        |              |     |
|----------------|--------|--------------------|--------|--------------|-----|
| <b>English</b> | 88.38% | <b>Mathematics</b> | 86.05% | <b>Irish</b> | N/A |
|----------------|--------|--------------------|--------|--------------|-----|

**THE VIEWS OF THE PARENTS, TEACHERS, GOVERNORS, SUPPORT STAFF AND CHILDREN**

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents, the teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Of the 90 questionnaires issued to the parents, 20 were returned to Inspection Services Branch, including ten which contained additional written comments. All of the parental questionnaires expressed very high levels of satisfaction with all areas of the life and work of the primary school. In particular they commented on the caring, inclusive ethos which promotes all aspects of the children's development, the caring and diligent staff and the effective leadership of the Principal. There was less satisfaction with the quality of the current accommodation but recognition that the staff has worked very hard to create a stimulating and attractive learning environment despite its shortcomings.

All of the teaching staff returned the online questionnaire, six included written comments. The responses were wholly positive about all aspects of the school. The written comments highlighted appreciation of the family atmosphere, the effective leadership of the Principal, the very good working relationships among the staff and the importance placed on the welfare and progress of the children.

The nine support staff responses to the on line questionnaire were also very positive. The additional written comments indicated that their ideas are valued and there is a supportive team spirit among the staff.

The inspectors also met with a group of the year 6 children; they talked with pride about their school and in particular about their enjoyment of learning, music, sports and extra curricular activities. They also talked about the opportunities to express their ideas through involvement in the school council. The children reported that they felt happy and safe in school and are aware of what to do if they have worries.

**ACCOMMODATION**

- The large convent building to which the school is adjoined has recently been vacated. It is important for all those with associated responsibilities to keep under review, any impact this may have on the ongoing maintenance of the primary school.



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