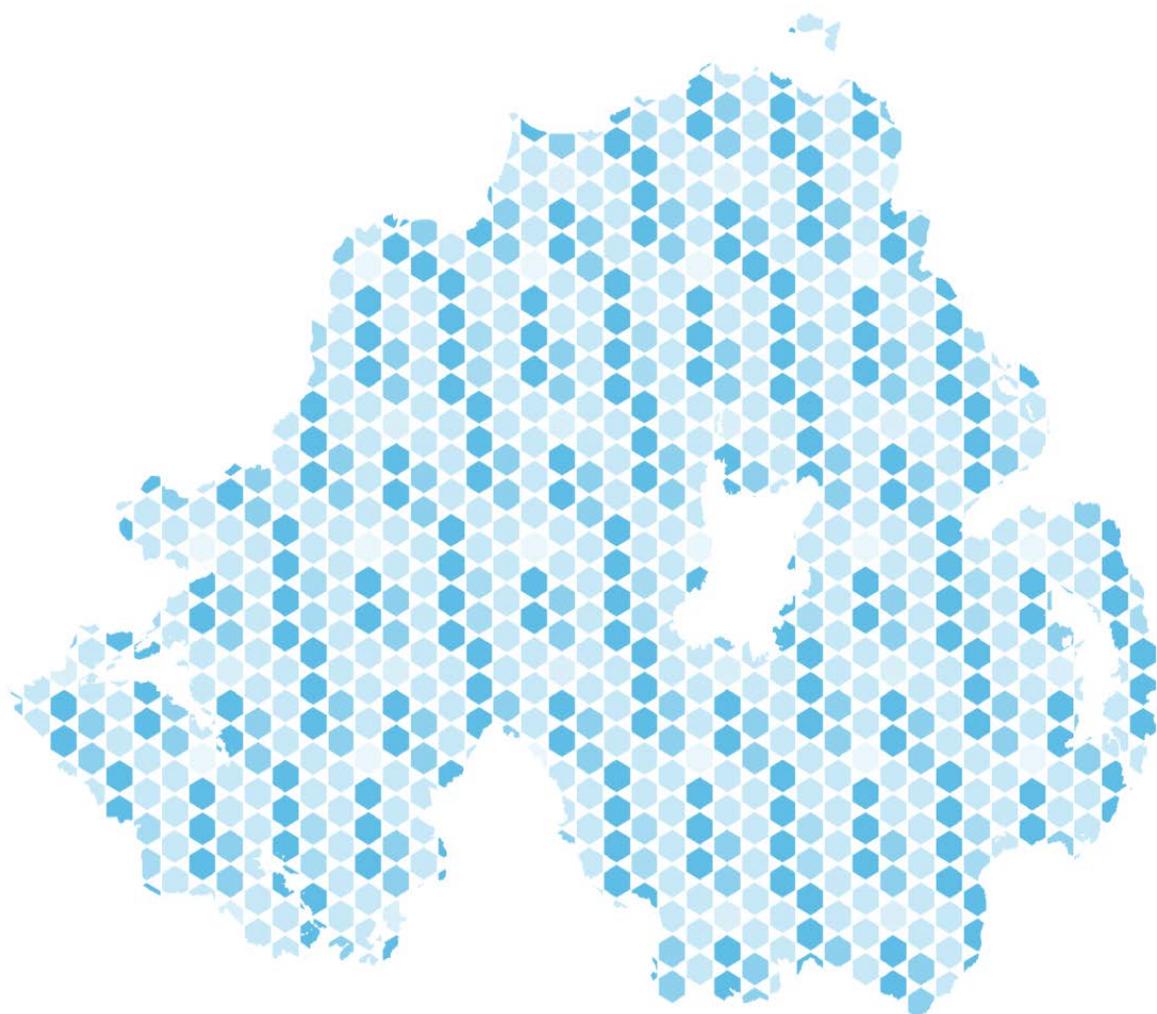


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Mary's Primary School and  
Nursery Unit, Cushendall

Report of an Inspection  
in October 2012

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. Mary's Primary School and Nursery Unit are situated in the village of Cushendall. The enrolment has increased over the past four years and stands currently at 138 children in the primary school, with a further 52 children enrolled in the nursery unit. Approximately 19% of the children are entitled to free school meals and 9% of the children have been identified by the school as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

## 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 the school and nursery unit is good. The school and nursery unit have important strengths in most of their educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the school and nursery unit have demonstrated the capacity to address.

A summary of the key findings of the inspection of the provision in the nursery unit is included in Appendix 1.

## KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

### Achievements and standards

The quality of the children's achievements and standards is good.

- The children are enthusiastic about their learning and work well both independently and in groups. They have good social and interpersonal skills and are very respectful of their peers and the adults in the school. The children achieve **good standards** in numeracy and **very good standards** in literacy.
- The children have very good talking and listening skills and, by year 7, are highly articulate and confident, giving well-structured and extended answers during class discussions. They read with fluency and expression, and talk enthusiastically about the wide range of authors and literature that they enjoy reading. The children write to a good standard in a range of genres and for a variety of audiences.
- The children are confident and have a good knowledge in most aspects of mathematics. By year 7, most of the children are flexible in their mathematical thinking and can apply their knowledge to solve problems.
- Most of the children with **special educational needs** make good progress in line with their ability.

- The children in the nursery unit attain good standards in language development and early mathematical skills.

### **Provision for Learning**

The quality of the provision for learning is good.

- The **quality of the teaching** observed ranged from good to very good, with one-quarter of the lessons observed being very good. In the most effective lessons: the teachers take good account of the children's interests and experiences when planning for the learning; and, the children are empowered to think creatively and manage their own learning, with appropriately challenging activities for all of the children, including the more able.
- The nursery unit provides a broad and balanced programme with good experiences for the children across all areas of the pre-school curriculum.
- The quality of the arrangements for **pastoral care** in the school and nursery unit is good. The children are very polite and well-behaved and there are good working relationships in all classes between the adults and the children. There are effective links between the school and the nursery unit to promote a smooth transition for the children as they move from the nursery school into year 1. The children's views are sought and acted upon through their participation in a well-established school council. There is a need for the staff to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the positive behaviour policy to ensure that children are rewarded appropriately for progress in self-management of their behaviour and their learning.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school and nursery unit have comprehensive arrangements in place for **safeguarding** children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.
- The school and nursery unit give good attention to promoting **healthy eating and physical activity** through, for example, the promotion of healthy breaks and lunchboxes and the walk to school days.
- The quality of the provision for **special educational needs** is good. The children who have been identified as have additional learning needs are well-supported by the teachers and the classroom assistants. There are good strategies in place to help the children overcome their barriers to learning and the special educational needs co-ordinator has established effective links with a wide range of external support agencies. The special educational needs co-ordinator needs to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the range of strategies being deployed within the classes and disseminate the very good practice that exists within the school.

## **Leadership and Management**

The quality of leadership and management is good

- The Principal has led the school through a period of significant staff changes and long-term absences in recent years. She has been dedicated in her efforts to ensure continuity for the children and continued good standards. Given the recent staffing appointments, it is timely that the Principal is currently reviewing the roles and responsibilities within the staff. It will be important that she establishes a collegiate, team approach to develop further the provision within the school and ensures that there are clear and open channels of communication between the staff, parents, children and the governors.
- The whole-school **self-evaluation** and **school development planning (SDP)** processes are satisfactory. The school needs to establish more rigorous processes for consultation and self-evaluation in order to ensure that the school development planning processes are effective in raising further the quality of the provision and the standards attained by the children.
- The Vice-principal, as the co-ordinator of literacy and special educational needs, provides useful guidance and direction to staff to effect improvement in the respective areas of responsibility. At the time of the inspection, the numeracy co-ordinator and the nursery unit co-ordinator were not present. In developing more rigorous processes of self-evaluation, it will be important for all co-ordinators to monitor and evaluate more robustly, the impact of school improvement actions on the quality of the learning and teaching, in the area of the curriculum for which they have responsibility.

## **CONCLUSION**

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the school's progress in addressing the area for improvement.

The area for improvement is to:

- develop a collegiate, team approach and establish more rigorous processes for consultation and self-evaluation in order to ensure that the school development planning processes are effective in raising further the quality of the provision and the standards attained by the children.

## ST MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY UNIT

### Key Findings of the Inspection

- The nursery unit has a positive ethos which promotes well the children's independence, confidence and self-esteem.
- The children in both the morning and afternoon sessions are well-settled; they are enthusiastic and clearly enjoy their learning. Most of the children concentrated for sustained periods and many of them showed a particular interest in books and in creative activities.
- There is a broad and balanced programme which provides good experiences across all areas of the pre-school curriculum and in particular the development of the children's listening skills, their good behaviour and the development of their social skills.
- The staff are skilful in promoting settled, purposeful play and in developing strategies to enrich the children's language development.
- There are very good pastoral links with the primary to ensure a smooth transition into year 1.

### CONCLUSION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the nursery unit is good. The nursery unit has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the nursery unit has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the nursery unit's progress on the areas for improvement.

The areas for improvement include the need:

- for a smooth transition from one activity to another in order that all available time is used effectively in developing the children's learning; and
- to develop further the methods of planning and assessment to ensure that there is sufficient challenge in all areas of the pre-school curriculum, a closer match to the children's individual needs and stages of development, and sufficient evidence to provide an accurate account of the children's progress and development.

## BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: St Mary's Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: 24/10/12**  
 ii. **School Reference Number: 303-0894** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Short**

B.

School Year	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Year 1 Intake	15	16	19	28	20
<b>Enrolments</b>					
Primary	134	127	136	140	138
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	53	52	53	52	52
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): 95.6% **NI Avg Att: 94.7%**

Average Attendance for those children on the Special Educational Needs Register: 91.2%

**Primary & Reception    Nursery Unit    Special Unit    Irish Medium Unit**

- D. i. Number of Teachers (including the principal and part-time teachers): 7    1    0    0  
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 19.7    NI PTR: 20.2
- iii. Average Class Size: 23
- iv. Class Size (Range): 17 to 28
- v. Ancillary Support:  
 Number of Hours **Per Week:**
- i. Clerical support: 25
  - ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support: 40
  - iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: 30
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 2.2%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 8.7%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 18.8%
- 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): **English 94.74%    Mathematics 94.74%    Irish N/A**

**STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON ST MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY UNIT,  
CUSHENDALL**

**1. Details of Children**

<b>Number of children:</b>	<b>Class 1</b>	<b>Class 2</b>
Attending full-time	0	0
Attending part-time	26	26
Under 3 years of age*	0	0
With statement of special educational needs	0	0
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	0	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	0	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	0	1
With English as an additional language	2	0

\* On 1 July.

\*\* The stages refer to those set out in the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	17.3%
Average attendance for the previous year.	89%

**2. Duration of Sessions**

<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time: am</b>	<b>Part-time: pm</b>
-	2½ hours	2½ hours

**3. Details of Staff**

<b>Number of:</b>	<b>Full-Time</b>	<b>Part-Time</b>
Teachers	1	0
Nursery Assistants (qualified)	1	0
Nursery Assistants (non-qualified)	0	0

<b>Number of: ***</b>	
Students	0
Trainees	0

\*\*\* Total placements since September of current year

**4. Parental Questionnaires**

Number issued	52
Percentage returned	17.3%
Number of written comments	1

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

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents and the teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection.

Of the 81 questionnaires issued to the parents in the primary school, 34 (42%) were returned to Inspection Services Branch and 17 contained additional written comments. Most of the questionnaire responses were very positive. Within the written responses the parents highlighted the dedicated and approachable staff and the caring environment in which the children are very happy. A number of issues were raised by those parents who provided written comments. These included concerns about communication with the Principal, the introduction and success of composite classes and the level of challenge provided for the more able children.

Of the 52 questionnaires issued within the nursery unit, nine (17%) were returned to Inspection Services Branch with one additional written comment. Almost all of the responses from the nursery unit were very positive about all aspects of the nursery unit.

Almost all of the responses from the teachers and the support staff were very positive.

The Education and Training Inspectorate has reported to the Principal, and a representative of the governors, any areas of concern emerging from the questionnaires.

The inspectors met with the Chair of the Board of Governors who expressed his support for the Principal and the staff, and for the good standard of learning and teaching provided within the school.

The inspectors also met with a group of the children from year 6. The children talked about the many aspects of school life they enjoy, including the friendly and supportive ethos, their love of reading and their participation in a range of internal and external literary and sporting competitions. They are aware of what to do if they have any worries about their safety and well-being.

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