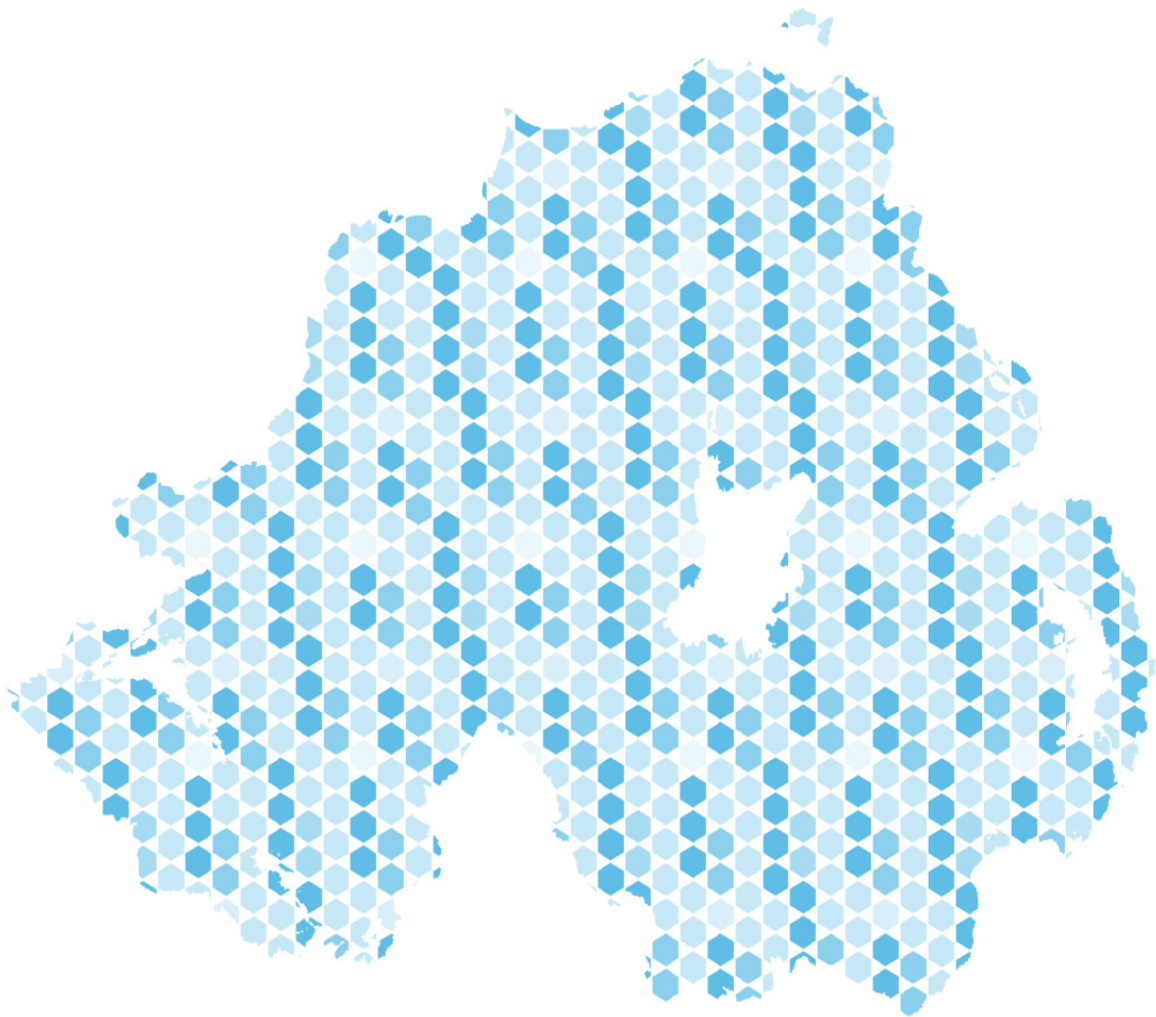


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Mary's Primary School,
Cabragh, Dungannon

Report of an Inspection
in January 2012



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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 |

BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: St Mary's Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 09/01/12**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 503-2734** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

| School Year | 2007/08 | 2008/09 | 2009/10 | 2010/11 | 2011/12 |
|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Year 1 Intake | 28 | 31 | 28 | 24 | 28 |
| Enrolments | | | | | |
| Primary | 212 | 217 | 220 | 211 | 203 |
| 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): 95% **NI Avg Att: 94.7%**

Average Attendance for those children on the Special Educational Needs Register: 96.7%

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Primary & Reception | Nursery Unit | Special Unit | Irish Medium Unit |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|

- D. i. Number of Teachers (including the principal and part-time teachers): 10 0 0 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)

ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 20.3 NI PTR: 20.2

iii. Average Class Size: 29

iv. Class Size (Range): 26 to 32

v. Ancillary Support:

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Number of Hours Per Week : | i. Clerical support: | 37 |
| | ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support: | 35 |
| | iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | |

vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 2.95%

vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 19%

viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0

ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 31.03%

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| 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 84.6% | Mathematics 87.2% | Irish N/A |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|

1. INTRODUCTION

SCHOOL CONTEXT

1.1 St Mary's Primary School is located in the town land of Cabragh which lies between Dungannon and Ballygawley in County Tyrone. The enrolment has fluctuated over the past four years and currently stands at 203. Most of the children come from the immediate and the wider rural area. Thirty-one percent of the children are entitled to free school meals and 19% have been identified as needing additional support with aspects of their learning, including a small number of children who have statements of special educational need (SEN).

1.2 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.

In addition, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning, and the school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection were evaluated.

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

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents, the teaching staff and the support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and a group of the children from year 6.

Of the 106 questionnaires issued to the parents, 56 (52.8%) were returned to Inspection Services Branch, including 33 which contained additional written comments. Almost all of the questionnaires expressed very high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In their written comments the parents highlighted: the strong commitment of the Principal, together with the teaching, support and ancillary staff to providing high quality care and guidance for the children; the very effective communications between home and school; and the high regard that the local community has for the school.

All of the teachers and nine of the support staff responded to the online questionnaires. All of the responses indicated very high levels of support for the work of the school. The staff reported that they feel valued, enjoy working in the school and work collectively as a team in developing the school in the best interests of all the children.

The governors expressed their strong support for the work of the school. They spoke very positively about the leadership of the Principal, the commitment and dedication of the staff, and the close links that the school has developed with the local community and pre-school and post primary feeder schools.

In discussions held with a group of children in year 6, they talked positively about their experiences in school. The children valued the support given by their teachers, the opportunities they have to participate and perform in extra-curricular activities and their active involvement in the School Council. They indicated strongly that they feel happy in school and know what to do if they have any worries about their care and well-being.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is outstanding. The children are very friendly and courteous and their behaviour is exemplary. The staff knows the children very well and works hard to promote a caring, family ethos based on mutual respect at all levels. There are very good opportunities, within the school's Personal Development and Mutual Understanding programme, to develop the children's self-awareness and appreciation of others in the school and the wider community.

The key strengths of the pastoral provision include: the attention given to celebrating the children's work and achievements both in and outside of school and the wide range of activities, events and visits which enhance the quality of the learning experiences. Of particular note is the importance given to developing the children's musical, creative and sporting abilities as a means to develop further their personal and social development.

The children contribute meaningfully to discussions and decisions about aspects of school life that directly affect them through circle-time sessions, comment boxes and the active School Council; their opinions and ideas are acted on and valued.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

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

1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. There are a range of strategies and initiatives to encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles, including health-related displays within the school, the promotion of healthy lunches and a wide range of physical and sporting activities.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The parents are invited to attend a range of meetings and receive valuable information, advice and guidance to help them support their children's learning across the curriculum. They are kept very well-informed about the school events through regular newsletters, the school website and a texting service. The 'Friends of St Mary's' support group has raised significant funds enabling the school to purchase additional resources which have helped to broaden the children's learning experiences.

The school works hard to develop and maintain very effective community links. At a local level, some senior citizens and the children's grandparents are invited to contribute to school life by sharing their knowledge and experiences and becoming involved in aspects of the work of the school. At a wider level, some local businesses provide sponsorship or practical help to enhance the learning experiences for the children.

Very good links are established with the nearby pre-school and post-primary schools; these arrangements support very well the children's transitions to the next stage of their education.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

The children respond very well to the high expectations set by their teachers and are highly motivated to learn. They settle quickly to their work, have very good self-management skills and engage purposefully in their learning. They work together collaboratively in pairs and small groups, expressing their own ideas confidently and showing respect for the opinions of others. From an early stage, they manage their own learning well, respond enthusiastically to challenging activities, make decisions about the most appropriate resources to use and persevere through to the completion of learning tasks.

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data over the past four years shows that the school's performance in English and mathematics is consistently in line with or above the Northern Ireland (NI) average for three out of the four years. Compared with schools in the same free school meals category, the levels of attainment in English and mathematics are generally in line with or above the average for similar schools. An analysis of the school's internal data for the same period indicates that all of the children, in each cohort, achieved standards in English and mathematics which were in keeping with their ability. In the one year of the four years where there was underachievement there were a range of factors that impacted on the children's attainment; for example, poor attendance and specific barriers to learning beyond the control of the school.

The children with special educational needs achieve very well. The close monitoring of progress and very good early intervention enables the children to become more independent and confident as they progress through the year groups and, on occasion, sufficient progress is made to remove children from the special needs register. By the end of KS2 they demonstrate good levels of progress in literacy and numeracy.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The quality of the provision for English and literacy is outstanding.

The literacy co-ordinator is committed to promoting very high standards in literacy across the school and makes excellent use of the school's internal and external performance data to set appropriate targets for all the children. She works very closely with the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) to develop and disseminate effective strategies to improve the attainment of all the children and in particular those who have been identified with low achievement. She provides valuable advice and guidance for the teachers, parents and support staff and has comprehensive systems in place to enable her to regularly monitor and evaluate the provision for learning and teaching in literacy across the school. Through her close scrutiny of the literacy planners, the sampling and moderation of children's work and regular classroom visits she ensures that high standards in literacy are maintained.

Across the key stages much emphasis is placed on developing the children's talking and listening skills and as a result almost all of the children have very good oral communication skills. The teachers use effective questioning to scaffold the children's oral responses and seek their views and opinions on a wide range of topics; the children are given appropriate thinking time, extended responses are encouraged and their suggestions are valued.

The staff has worked hard to develop reading across the school. The children are taught to read systematically through the use of commercial reading schemes which are enhanced by a wide range of appropriate support materials such as novels, 'big books' and reference materials. They enjoy reading and are developing a good range of appropriate strategies to

help them interpret unfamiliar text. During the inspection, groups of children read with fluency and understanding. Reading is promoted positively in the school through book fairs and through several reading support programmes and initiatives, for example, 'Reading Partners' and 'Paired Reading'. The staff has created a literacy rich environment throughout the school and very good use is made of the attractive class libraries which provide books that match the interests and abilities of the children. Almost all of the children achieve very good standards in reading and by the end of KS2 they are reading at a level commensurate with or above their ability.

The standards attained by the children in writing are excellent.

In the foundation stage (FS) the children are well supported to develop letter formation, to write words and to express their ideas in simple sentences. They have well-planned opportunities to experiment with writing during play-based learning activities. In KS1 and KS2 the children display increased accuracy, fluency and clarity in their writing. They are becoming more independent and have opportunities to plan, edit and extend their writing through a wide range of genres and across the curriculum. They write for a variety of audiences and produce pieces of writing in which they express their opinions and ideas clearly. The children take great pride in their written work and present it creatively and to a very high standard.

Information and communication technology is used effectively throughout the school to support the promotion of literacy, through for example, the development of research skills using the internet and the creative use of word processing to enhance the presentation of written work.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The overall quality of provision in mathematics and numeracy is outstanding.

The numeracy co-ordinator is highly committed to the ongoing development of the provision for mathematics and numeracy. He is effective in promoting mathematics throughout the school and supports the teachers very well in developing their classroom practice. The monitoring processes are incisive and include the self-evaluation of the provision and standards for mathematics; for example, through scrutiny of the teachers' planning, sampling and moderation of the children's work, performance data and through performance review and staff development classroom observations. Information from training courses is shared and support provided, as necessary, to ensure that the staff have a shared understanding of best practice in numeracy such as, problem-solving and the use of numeracy websites to support learning. The staff collaborates well on auditing and action-planning for improvement and has recently compiled a comprehensive whole school numeracy policy and scheme of work for progression in mathematics.

The school gives a high priority to developing the children's mental agility, their flexibility with number and their reasoning skills. In the mental mathematics sessions observed during the inspection, the children engaged enthusiastically in a range of challenging activities which consolidated their understanding of key concepts, fostered their use of accurate mathematical language and meaningfully connected their learning across the mathematics curriculum.

Throughout all key stages, the teachers, the support staff and the children demonstrate enthusiasm for, and enjoyment in, mathematics. Information and communication technology is used very effectively to support learning and teaching across the curriculum. The children are very confident and competent in their use of ICT to support their learning. They use programmable devices and a range of age-appropriate software to consolidate and extend their understanding of key mathematical concepts.

From the FS to KS2, the teachers build on the children's prior learning; they model accurate mathematical language and scaffold the development of mathematical concepts and processes. The skilful teaching of mathematics is set within meaningful contexts; for example euro to sterling conversion activities, and time and birthday related investigations. The staff often challenges the children to estimate and to think about the validity of their responses and when appropriate the children use calculators to confirm accuracy. The school provides a range of mathematical support for the children with differing needs in mathematics and this is closely monitored through effective liaison between the support staff and class teacher.

In discussion with groups of children, they demonstrated high levels of confidence, understanding and competence in all areas of the mathematics curriculum. By the end of KS2 almost all of the children attain excellent standards in mathematics in line with or above their ability.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The teachers short-term and medium-term planning is centred appropriately on clearly defined learning intentions which guide effectively the work in the classroom and ensures progression. There are a range of detailed teaching and learning activities outlined and topic webs are used to support connected learning across the curriculum.

The teachers complete useful written evaluations of their planned work which generally outline the extent to which the learning intentions were met and help identify the future learning needs of groups and individual children. Throughout the school the children have very good opportunities to contribute to the planning process.

3.2 TEACHING

The quality of the teaching is a key strength of the school. During the inspection, the quality of the teaching observed ranged from good to outstanding; almost all of the teaching observed was very good or outstanding. The teachers know the children very well, have high expectations and match the work to both challenge and support the children as appropriate. They use a wide range of teaching approaches, including whole-class teaching and opportunities for group and paired work during practical activities. They effectively model good practice within the lessons and interact closely with the children to support their learning. Cross-curricular topics enrich the experiences of the children and contextualize the learning. The teachers share the learning intentions with the children and the plenary sessions are used well to summarise and consolidate learning. The classroom assistants make a significant contribution to the teaching and learning in all classes and contribute to the high standards in the school. Information and communication technology is used creatively in all classes, with teachers making good use of computer programmes, programmable devices and websites to support learning and teaching across the curriculum.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The teachers mark the children's written work regularly and the feedback is often personalised and affirmative. Assessment for learning strategies are well-embedded across the school and where this is most effective, the combination of constructive comments made by the teacher at the point of learning and self and peer-assessment enables the children to make further improvement to the quality of their work.

A combination of classroom observation and a suitable range of standardised and non-standardised testing are used to assess the children's levels of achievement in English and mathematics. The teachers use this information well to identify those children who require additional support or greater challenge with aspects of their learning in literacy and numeracy. Information is shared both formally and informally among the year group teachers and the assessment team ensures that there is effective communication of any areas for development in learning concepts, skills and attitudes. Effective target-setting for each child is leading to improvement in standards and where there is under or low achievement the parents are informed promptly and advised about how to support their child in their learning.

A detailed end-of-year progress report is provided for each child with an emphasis on seeking a parental response about their views on the holistic educational experience of the child.

3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Special Educational Needs is given a high priority by the school and the quality of the provision is outstanding.

The children benefit from the excellent support of the SENCO and the Support Teacher who work closely with the class teachers and classroom assistants in addressing the individual needs of the children. In addition, peripatetic support is provided for some of the children. The teachers identify early those children who require additional support with aspects of their learning through observations of the children in class, the use of standardised tests and the analysis of assessment data. Differentiated work is provided and the teachers and classroom assistants spend valuable time with individuals and groups supporting them in their learning. The Education Plan targets set for the children are well focused, specific to individual needs, appropriately time bound to measure progress and guide the teachers effectively in their work. The SENCO and Support Teacher, together with the class teachers, monitor and review the children's progress on a regular basis and there is evidence to show that the actions taken have resulted in significant improvements in the children's learning.

Excellent links are maintained with the parents and a range of support agencies.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The overall quality of the leadership and management is outstanding.

The Principal has worked in the school for over thirty years and has been in post for 17 years. He skilfully promotes a collaborative leadership style and strong team spirit at all levels. He provides highly effective strategic leadership giving a high priority to meeting the care and wellbeing of all the children and to raising further the standards they attain. He has successfully developed links and partnerships with a range of stakeholders to promote the

school and to enhance the learning opportunities for all the children. He facilitates the professional development of all the staff and ensures that good practice is shared and disseminated to maintain high standards of learning and teaching. The Vice-principal and co-ordinators are very supportive of the Principal and provide excellent guidance for all of the staff in promoting the children's learning.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The school improvement process is clearly linked to the school development plan (SDP) which is underpinned by regular and effective self-evaluation including the analysis of qualitative and quantitative information. There are effective processes for consultation about the SDP within the school community. Appropriate policies and action plans are in place for the key curricular areas that are focused on raising further the children's standards and achievements. The school meets the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations.

4.3 ACCOMODATION

The teachers have created stimulating environments in the classrooms and shared areas which support and celebrate the children's learning. Good use is made of the available outdoor space to provide learning opportunities and the school is very well maintained.

4.4 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The governors are fully involved in the strategic planning and policy development for the school. They support effectively the Principal and the staff in the implementation of the SDP and they have a good understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by the school.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the outstanding quality of the pastoral provision characterised by the caring, family and community ethos based on mutual respect at all levels;
- the excellent standards attained by the children in literacy and numeracy;
- the outstanding quality of the special educational needs provision;
- the commitment and strong sense of collegiality of the teaching and non-teaching staff and the very high standard of the teaching across the school;
- the highly effective strategic leadership of the Principal and his commitment to continuous whole -school improvement; and
- the excellent leadership and management skills demonstrated by the Vice-principal and curricular coordinators in developing the children's learning.

5.2 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The school has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- The road at the front of school is very congested at the start and end of the school day and there are no traffic calming measures outside the school, or in the immediate area, to alert drivers to the possible dangers at these times.
- The controlled access arrangements at the rear of the school need to be reviewed.
- The governors report that the heating system in the main school building provides inadequate heat to the classrooms.

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