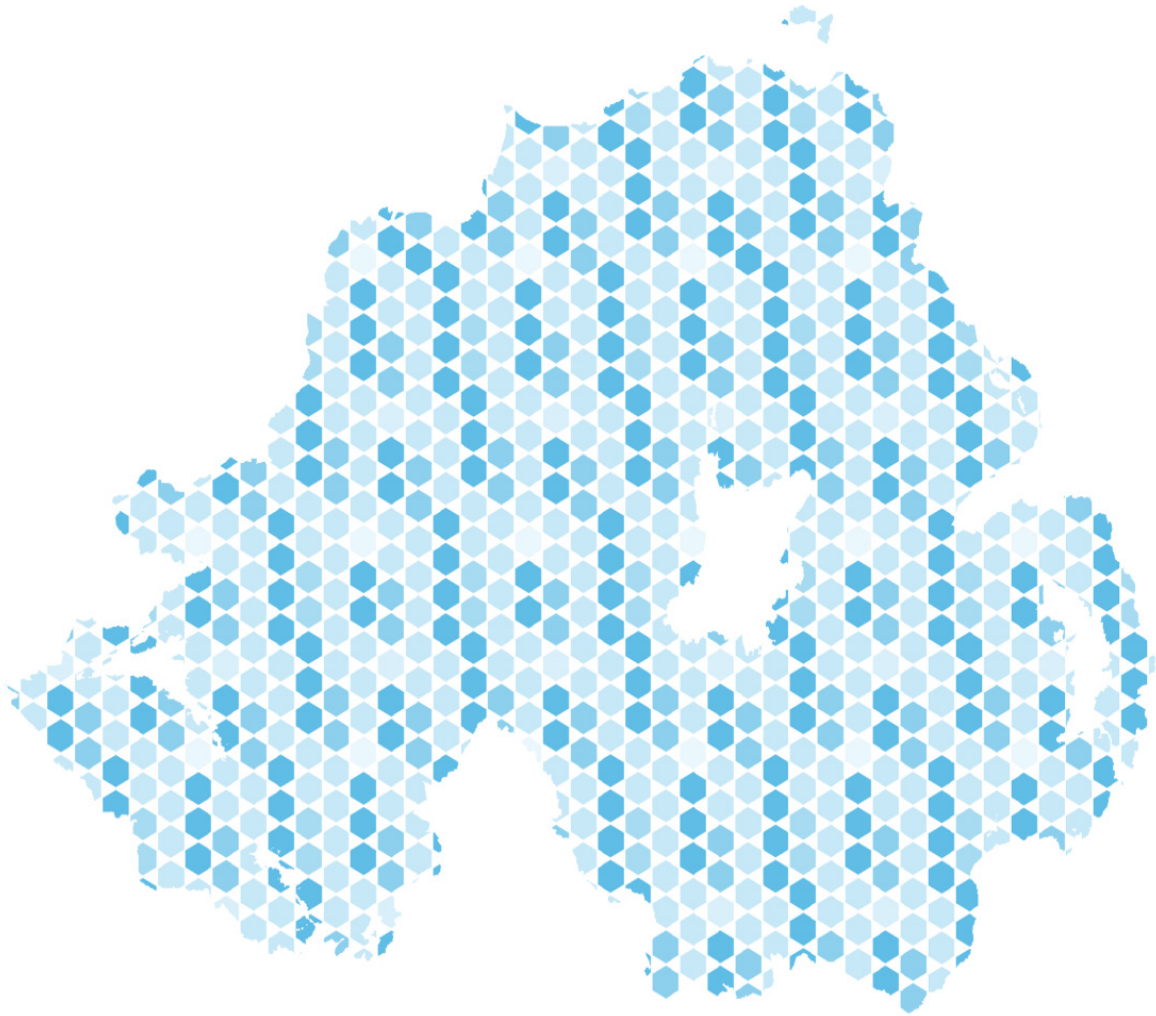


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Mary's Primary School,
Draperstown

Report of an Inspection
in January 2012



Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



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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: 303-2273** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Year 1 Intake	32	24	29	33	34
Enrolments					
Primary	218	207	196	199	207
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): 94.5% **NI Avg Att: 94.7%**

Average Attendance for those children on the Special Educational Needs Register: 95.7%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit	Irish Medium Unit
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- 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): 23 NI PTR: 20.2

iii. Average Class Size: 25.8

iv. Class Size (Range): 18 to 31

v. Ancillary Support:

Number of Hours Per Week :	i. Clerical support:	27.5
	ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support:	60
	iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support:	45

vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 0.9%

vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 24.6%

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

ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 24.6%

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 62.5%	Mathematics 50.1%	Irish N/A
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Mary's Primary School is situated in Draperstown, County Derry. All of the children come from the local area. The enrolment has risen over the last three years and currently stands at 207. The school has identified almost 25% of the children as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning. Approximately 25% of the children are entitled to free school meals.

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 opportunities for the parents, and the staff to complete confidential questionnaires, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and a group of year 6 children.

One hundred and forty-six parental questionnaires were issued, of which 73% were returned to Inspection Services Branch; 41 of these contained a written comment. Almost all of the parental, and all of the staff, questionnaire responses were highly affirmative and expressed strong support for the work of the school.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) reported to the Principal, and representatives of the governors, the findings from the questionnaires.

The governors stated that they were informed very well about the work of the school and expressed their strong support for, and confidence in, the Principal and the staff, and the quality of the education they provide for the children.

The children in year 6 talked enthusiastically about their happy, caring and safe school, the help they receive from their teachers, and the opportunities for extra-curricular activities. They indicated strongly that they enjoy their learning and know what to do if they have any worries about their safety.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is very good. There is a welcoming and inclusive ethos and the staff displays high levels of commitment to the care and well being of the children. The School Council is highly effective both in school and in supporting the local community, for example, by lobbying committee at Stormont to retain the local library. The children play an active role in the creation, agreement and review of the classroom behaviours; their behaviour is exemplary.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has very good arrangements in place for the safeguarding of children. These arrangements reflect the guidance given by the Department of Education (DE).

1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. This aspect of provision is promoted through the introduction of healthy food choices for break and lunch, and through the effective contribution of the Eco School Committee to encouraging healthy lifestyles. The children have regular opportunities for sports and a wide range of equipment is available to encourage energetic outdoor play, which help the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The school places a high priority on developing and maintaining a wide range of productive links with the parents and the local community through, for example, the production of the informative weekly newsletter. There is a high level of regular, effective parental consultation. The children's learning experiences are enriched through the many sporting and musical opportunities. As well as strong links with the local post primary school, particularly in relation to the Eco-committee, and with the local pre-school centres, the children also benefit from the curricular links established with other schools through video-conferencing opportunities, joint community projects and through the Comenius and the Dissolving Boundaries projects.

2. **ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS**

2.1 LEARNING

In most of the lessons observed, the children are highly motivated, take pride in their work and manage well their own learning. In these classes, the children are encouraged to set their own targets for learning and to monitor their progress; self and peer evaluations are key features of the learning. When classroom routines are well-defined, and learning experiences are matched well to needs and abilities, the children complete tasks co-operatively, participate enthusiastically, give considered and extended responses and meet their targets for improvement. The children identified as having additional needs make good progress in their learning and meet the targets outlined in their individual education plans (IEP).

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, when compared with both the Northern Ireland (NI) average and with schools in the same FSM band, has fluctuated from being in line with the average to being below the average. An analysis of the school's internal performance data indicates that most of the children achieve standards in line with their ability.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The overall provision for English and literacy is good.

The children display very good talking and listening skills, and participate effectively in pairs, groups and whole class discussions. Through the provision of a wide range of opportunities, the children can talk about their learning and share their views. The children's language is developed further through effective questioning which encourages them to make judgements and voice their opinions. The children are encouraged to address different audiences beyond the classroom, including interviewing as part of their research, which builds their confidence further in talking and listening.

The children learn to read using a well structured programme which meets their interests and is matched to their ability. In all classrooms, there is a language rich environment which supports the development of the children's literacy skills. The teachers make good use of a range of strategies including the systematic development of phonological awareness and the children approach unfamiliar words well, using a good range of effective strategies and cues. The children read with fluency and expression, show a good understanding of text and are keen to talk about their favourite authors and books. By the end of KS2, the majority of the children are reading at a level commensurate with their age or stage of development.

In the foundation stage (FS), the children develop letter formation, write words and are able to express ideas in simple sentences. In KS1, the children become more confident in their writing across a range of forms. By KS2, the children can write across the curriculum and produce extended writing of a good quality based on their own research. The children engage in drafting and editing processes to improve, extend and correct their work.

Thirty five children who have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN) receive very effective support for literacy individually or in small withdrawal groups with the SEN teacher. A key feature of the provision for these children is the recent introduction of 'Rainbow Books', designed by the staff and outlining very clear targets in literacy focused on promoting improvements in the children's learning. All of the children respond positively to these approaches and are making good progress in their learning in literacy.

Information and communication technology, including video conferencing and the Interactive Whiteboards, are used effectively to extend and enhance the literacy provision.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The quality of provision in mathematics and numeracy is good.

Across all key stages the children are able to apply their mathematical knowledge to meaningful contexts across the curriculum, and standards of numeracy presentation are excellent. Information and communication technology is also used effectively across the key stages to enhance the children's mathematical experiences.

In the FS, the children develop well their mathematical concepts, skills and language through a wide range of activities such as play-based learning activities and a combination of suitable oral and practical work which is matched well to their interests. In the best practice observed, the children were given opportunities to talk about their learning and to extend further their knowledge and understanding by the use of open-ended tasks. In a minority of the lessons, the level of challenge in the activities was too low and the success criteria for the learning were not explicit.

As the children progress through KS1 and KS2, mental mathematics strategies are developed well and the children can talk about their work using appropriate mathematical language. In KS1, the children use well practical resources, including mathematical games, to consolidate their learning. In a significant minority of the lessons, the work set did not build sufficiently on the children's prior learning. During discussions with the children in year 4, the children spoke positively about their learning of mathematics and had a good understanding of shape and space, number bonds and measures.

In KS2, in the majority of the lessons observed, the children developed and consolidated their mathematical learning through imaginative, well-planned lessons where they worked in groups and in pairs to meet very clear, realistically challenging learning outcomes. Noteworthy features of most of the KS2 lessons observed were the appropriate differentiation of the tasks to match the needs of all of the children, and the setting of the work in meaningful, real-life contexts. By year 7, the children have a very good understanding of number, shape and space, time and have flexibility in their mathematical thinking.

The current support for children who require additional support in numeracy is provided in-class; as identified by the school, there is a need to develop further the numeracy support. The school is also aware of the need to include in their IEPs specific numeracy targets for those children who require additional support.

The planning for numeracy provides for a suitably broad and balanced curriculum. While the teachers have made a good start to evaluating the children's responses to the planned activities, they need to use this information more effectively to inform their future planning to ensure the work is matched more appropriately to the abilities of the children and to raise the children's levels of attainment.

Overall, across KS1 and KS2, most of the children make satisfactory progress.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The planning has been reviewed recently and the teachers prepare conscientiously for lessons using an agreed planning format. In the best practice, in half of the lessons observed, the teachers' planning is matched closely to the ability of the children, links across the areas of the curriculum are developed well through thematic planning, and comprehensive evaluations are used effectively to inform future planning for learning. It is important to continue to monitor the quality of the planning, and in particular to address the lack of clear differentiation for the ability levels within half of the classes in order to keep expectations realistically high and to ensure appropriate challenge for all the children.

3.2 TEACHING

The quality of the teaching observed during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to outstanding; most was good or better, and a minority of the lessons had areas for improvement.

In the very good and outstanding practice, in half of the lessons observed, the lesson was well-structured, with learning intentions and success criteria defined clearly and with an appropriate review of learning at the end; there was appropriate challenge for all of the children and realistically high expectations of what they can achieve; the management of learning developed the children's independence and suitable practical activities were used effectively to engage the children in thinking about their learning.

Where the practice was least effective, in a minority of the lessons, the learning was not tailored closely enough to the ability of all of the children and as a result, some children are not achieving the outcomes of which they are capable; the pace of the lesson was too slow, with insufficient progression in learning. It is important in these lessons that established routines and structure are in place to ensure there is an environment more conducive to learning.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The assessment co-ordinator and the teachers engage in rigorous analysis of the assessment outcomes to prioritise the key areas for whole-school development and, at individual and class level, to identify low and under-achievement. The school now needs to use more effectively the assessment outcomes to inform planning at all levels, to ensure the provision provides appropriate progression, challenge and support for each child. The school has worked closely with the parents and the local post-primary schools with the aim of improving the transition experience for each year 7 child through, for example, the agreement of the assessment data which should accompany each child to his/her next school.

Through, for example, the use of testing and the teachers' observations, the school strives to identify early those children requiring additional support with their learning and to provide appropriate intervention strategies.

There are effective procedures in place for keeping the parents informed about their children's learning and progress. The annual written reports are prepared to a high standard by the class teachers, and the Principal adds personally written comments for each child. The reports indicate clearly to the parents the children's progress and highlight key areas for improvement. The teachers review regularly the progress the children identified as having special educational needs make in meeting their targets and both the parents and the children are well informed about the progress made.

The quality of the teachers' marking is monitored and assessed regularly by the curriculum co-ordinators. Across all key stages, the teachers mark the children's work regularly and conscientiously; they add supportive, appreciative comments and indicate to the children how their work can be improved. The children are also encouraged through self and peer assessment to reflect upon and improve the quality of their work, to set personal learning targets and to evaluate the work of others.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The overall quality of leadership and management is good.

The Principal provides very good strategic leadership and has a clear vision for the school. Her leadership is underpinned by a commitment to meeting the needs of, and raising the standards for, all of the children, as well as to the continued development of the school in the community. She knows the children well and has high ambitions for their individual

achievements. Since her appointment two and a half years ago, the Principal has been instrumental in establishing a collaborative approach to the school improvement process and has ensured that the pace of change within the school has been managed well.

The co-ordinators provide good leadership and support the staff in implementing the planned programmes. Appropriate policies guide and support their work. Along with the Principal, the Vice-principal and the co-ordinators evaluate and review systematically the provision across all year groups; they demonstrate a clear commitment to action planning and to school improvement.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The Principal has led the staff in creating a culture of reflection and self-evaluation, although this is at an early stage of development.

The school's improvement process is linked to a well-constructed school development plan, with relevant associated action plans, which has taken account of the views of a range of stakeholders within the school community. The plan complies fully with the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the highly motivated children who co-operate well with one another and are actively involved in setting targets and assessing their own learning;
- the very good quality of the pastoral care;
- the wide range of productive links established with the parents and the local and wider communities which enhance the children's learning experiences;
- the quality of the teaching which was very good or outstanding in one-half of the lessons observed; and
- the very good quality of the leadership of the Principal and her clear, strategic vision for the school.

5.2 The area for improvement is the need:

- to develop further the planning to ensure appropriate progression, challenge and support for all the children in order to raise further the standards in numeracy and literacy.

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this 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 Inspectorate will monitor the school's progress on the area for improvement.

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