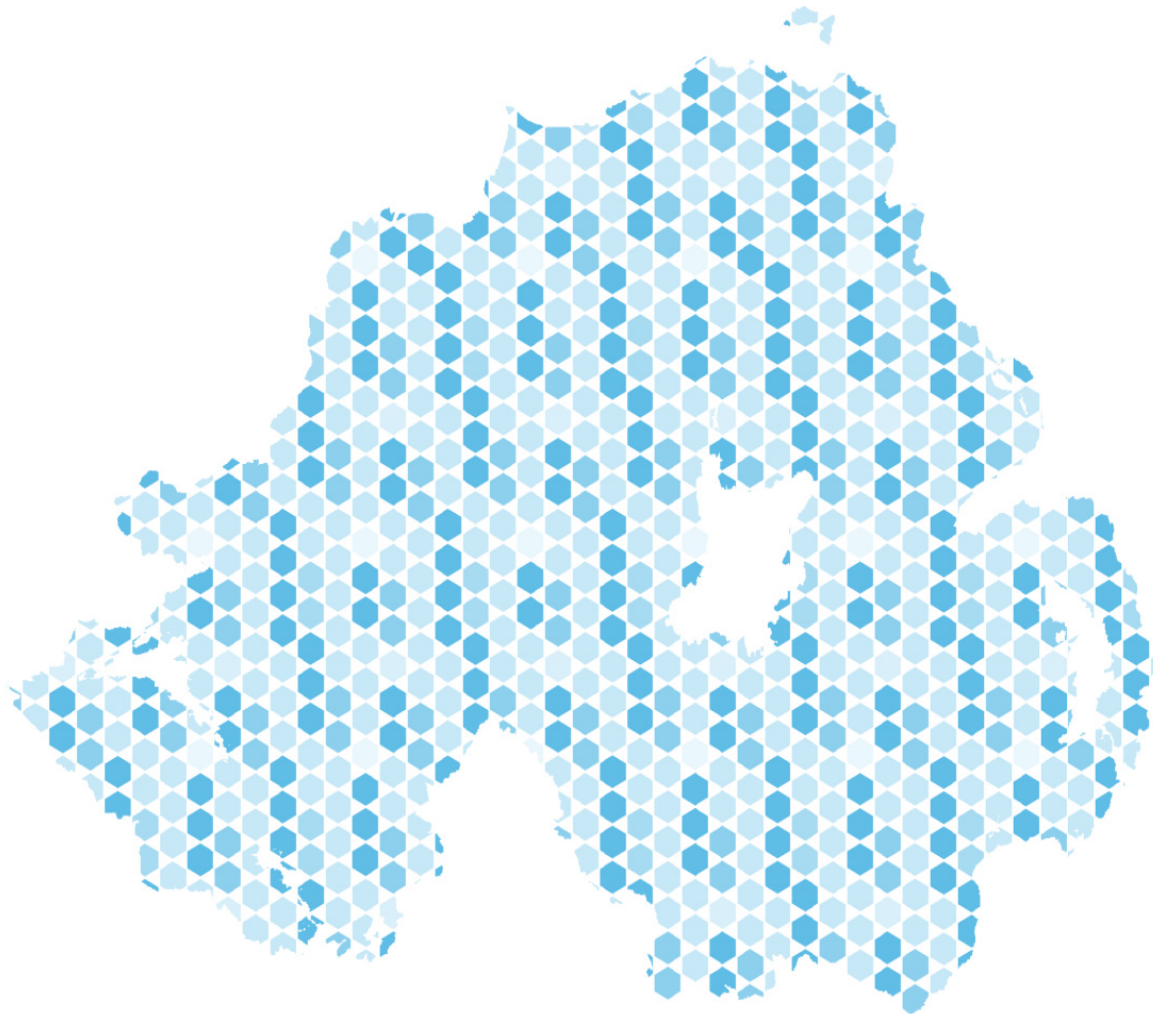


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Patrick's Primary School,
Armagh

Report of an Inspection
in May 2010

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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 Patrick’s Primary**iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 17/05/10**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 503-1183**iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Year 1 Intake	53	65	47	62	53
Enrolments					
Primary	439	453	438	444	429
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Special Unit	11	13	0	0	9
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):

95.5%

NI Avg Att: 94.9%

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): 21.4 0 1 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)

ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 20.4 NI PTR: 20.4

iii. Average Class Size: 23

iv. Class Size (Range): 9 to 29

v. Ancillary Support:

Number of Hours Per Week :	i. Clerical support:	39.75
	ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support:	63.75
	iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support:	31.25

vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 3%

vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 20%

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

ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 17%

x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2008/09 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics:	English 68.25%	Mathematics 74.6%
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Patrick's Primary School is situated on the Loughgall Road on the outskirts of Armagh City. The majority of the children come from a wide catchment area. The enrolment of the school has fluctuated over recent years and currently stands at 440, which includes nine children in the Learning Support Centre (LSC) who have a diverse range of learning needs. The school reports that approximately 51% of the children come from a Neighbourhood Renewal area and approximately 17% are entitled to free school meals. The school has identified approximately 20% of the children as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on:

- the quality of the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy;
- the quality of provision for learning;
- the quality of leadership and management; and
- the school's arrangements for pastoral care and child protection.

The inspection also evaluated the contribution of information and communication technology (ICT) in developing and supporting learning.

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 and support staff to complete confidential questionnaires prior to the inspection. Meetings were held with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors), and a representative group of children from years 6 and 7.

One hundred and eleven questionnaires were issued to the parents; approximately 28% were returned to Inspection Services Branch of which 16 contained additional written comments. Nearly all of the responses indicated a high level of satisfaction with the school. In particular, the parents highlighted the high regard for the school in the local community, the care and support provided by all of the staff for the children and the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided. A small number of the responses made comments and suggestions relating to different aspects of the school's procedures and these are dealt with in the body of the report.

Fourteen teachers and five support staff completed the online questionnaire; five of the teachers and one member of the support staff included written comments. The responses were generally positive and supportive of the work of the school, however a small number of comments were made about funding issues and the role of the classroom assistant.

The governors expressed their appreciation of the work of the school, the commitment of the staff to the children and the leadership provided by the Principal. They also expressed concerns about the general state of the school building. These issues are listed in the Appendix.

The children in year 6 spoke very positively and enthusiastically about all aspects of school life. They are aware of what to do if they have worries about their safety or well-being.

An analysis of the questionnaires and the written comments made by the parents and the staff were shared with the Principal and the governors.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in this school is outstanding.

The strengths of the pastoral care provision include:

- the caring, supportive ethos which fosters the children's confidence and self-esteem;
- the excellent working relationships between the teachers and the children and the focus placed on the children's personal development;
- the wide range of extra-curricular activities and initiatives which provide a very good breadth of experiences for the children;
- the effective strategies in place to promote positive behaviour and mutual respect, leading to exemplary behaviour and good manners;
- the celebration of the children's work and achievements through attractive displays of their work; and
- the good methods of communication with the parents and the increasing opportunities for them to become involved in the life of the school.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has very good comprehensive arrangements in place 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, for example, through the provision of the popular Fruit Tuck Shop and the strong focus on sport, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

1.7 LINKS WITH THE PARENTS AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY

There is a strong sense of community within the school and the parents are encouraged at every opportunity to become involved in school events and in supporting their children's learning. The Principal and the teachers work conscientiously to ensure that communication with the parents is effective and maintained through, for example, regular newsletters, parental surveys, the school Web site, digital signage, Open Days, information meetings and

a range of courses. In addition, the Extended Schools Provision provides opportunities to develop further links with the parents, local schools, colleges and sporting and community groups. The experiences provided help to strengthen relationships at all levels and to enrich the children's educational and social experiences and to ensure smooth transitions between schools.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

The children are well motivated and show a positive attitude to their learning. They settle quickly to their work and show good levels of interest and engagement. The quality of working relationships between the teachers and children is very good and the children are enabled to work well independently and collaboratively in a wide range of contexts.

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data over the past four years shows that in English and mathematics the school's performance is below the Northern Ireland average. The levels of attainment in English and mathematics remain well below the average when compared with schools in the same free school meals category.

In contrast, evidence from other sources including an analysis of the children's books and other work suggest that the standards are higher than these end of key stage outcomes would suggest.

In the LSC the good working relationships and caring atmosphere develop the children's confidence. The children have regular opportunities to integrate into the mainstream classes in order to develop their social and self-management skills. While most of the children are achieving well in their learning, for a small number progress is slow.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The quality of provision for English and literacy is good.

The literacy co-ordinator provides very effective leadership for the teachers and has made a good start in using a wide range of assessment data to identify and address under-achievement. She supports her colleagues well through regular meetings, collaborative planning and thorough monitoring and evaluation of pupils learning.

The quality of the whole school planning is good. The yearly and half-termly planners provide a broad framework for the development of literacy. The schemes of work provide useful guidance for teachers and support the development of the children's literacy skills. In the best practice, the teachers' individual planners are well annotated with helpful comments and have detailed evaluations which are used to inform future learning and teaching.

The teachers place much emphasis on helping the children to acquire good oral skills. During the play activities and plenary sessions observed in the foundation stage (FS) the children were able to talk clearly and confidently about their work and listened attentively to others. In KS1 and KS2, most of the teachers use effective questioning, as well as paired and group discussion, to enable the children to make very good extended oral responses.

In the FS the children's reading and writing skills are developed effectively through a range of approaches. The children have excellent opportunities to develop further their literacy skills through well-planned play activities, which enable them to work confidently as individuals and with others and they are able to produce pieces of independent writing of a high standard. The teachers provide opportunities for guided and shared reading and, when observed reading, the children demonstrated good word attack skills and displayed good levels of fluency.

The school has a coherent approach to improving the children's reading skills. From FS, there is a good focus on linguistic phonics and on providing the children with good quality shared, modelled and guided reading experiences. As the children progress through the school into KS2, reading is further encouraged through regular timetabled visits to the library and through sustained silent reading in class. There is however a need, particularly at KS2, to promote independent reading more fully and to make more regular and effective use of novels. By the end of KS2 the majority of the children read at a level corresponding to, or above their chronological age.

The development of writing in the FS and KS1 is very good. The children are provided with shared, modelled and independent writing opportunities and are taught how to construct basic sentences. As their skills develop, the children's personal writing is promoted more extensively so that by the end of KS1, the majority of children can express their ideas in a more extended, structured and coherent way. In KS2 the standard of the children's writing is good, however they need to be provided with a wider range of opportunities to practise and refine further their writing skills linked to their novel work. The literacy team needs to ensure that opportunities for writing across the curriculum are planned for more rigorously and creatively across all areas of learning.

Information and communication technology is integrated well into the teaching of literacy through, for example the creative use of interactive whiteboards to stimulate the children's interest and present information more clearly and the good use of commercially produced software to develop the children's literacy skills further.

In the LSC the children are benefiting from the emphasis on phonics, word recognition skills and sentence construction. The activities in which they participate are differentiated and tailored to suit their abilities and as a result nearly all of the children achieve good standards in literacy.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The quality of the provision for mathematics and numeracy is good.

In the FS the children demonstrate a clear understanding of the mathematical concepts appropriate to their age and ability and are developing mathematical language to discuss their learning. The teachers promote mathematics through a wide range of activities and play-based learning, developing the children's ability to work confidently in pairs, groups and independently.

In KS1 and 2 the children demonstrate an understanding of number, measure, shape and handling data, and engage well collaboratively in pairs and small groups in problem-solving and investigative work. In the best practice observed the teachers make use of effective questioning to challenge the children's thinking, to encourage extended responses and

develop further their mathematical language. The children use practical equipment and resources effectively to embed mathematical concepts and to develop their independence. The mental mathematics activities are well paced, matched to the children's ability and linked to the activity of the main lesson. In the less effective practice there was a lack of challenge across the ability range and the lesson lacked pace.

The mathematics programme is well planned and provides clear lines of progression. The numeracy co-ordinator monitors and evaluates the provision of mathematics through classroom observations, the sampling of the children's work and the analysis of performance data. She is leading the school very effectively in addressing the underachievement in mathematics through, a clear emphasis on mental mathematics across all year groups and a programme of support in foundation stage which involves the parents in their child's learning. The teachers work well in year groups to plan together and have begun to set targets for improving mathematics attainment based on the analysis of performance data. There is a need for more clearly planned differentiation to ensure all children are achieving in line with their ability. At the end of KS2 the majority of the children achieve standards in mathematics that are commensurate with their age.

In the LSC the children experience a broad curricular programme and enjoy their work. The mathematics lessons, in particular, use contexts based on real situations and contain a suitable focus on the children's life skills and financial capabilities. Overall the children in the LSC reach standards that are in line with their abilities.

In the best practice ICT is used effectively to present information visually, enable revision work and to support and enhance the learning. The children are using appropriate websites confidently to engage in their learning.

3. THE QUALITY OF THE PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

There is consistent and good quality planning across the school, with teachers working collaboratively in year groups. There is clear evidence that the planning is implemented well into the practice and is used to guide the teachers in their work with the children. The teachers evaluate well, in order to inform future planning.

3.2 TEACHING

During the inspection, most of the teaching observed was good or better and a minority of the lessons were outstanding. In the more effective practice seen, lessons were well matched to the needs and interests of the children and the teachers enabled the children to respond in more extended ways through very skilful questioning. These learning experiences were well structured, imaginative and had good pace and challenge. In a small number of the lessons there was an over-use of routine tasks and activities were not well matched to the needs, interests and abilities of the children. In KS1 and 2 more emphasis needs to be placed on improving the quality and effectiveness of differentiation in the lessons to ensure each child reaches their full potential. The school has made excellent progress in embracing the underlying principles of the Northern Ireland Curriculum and teachers employ a wide range of teaching strategies to develop active learning.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The teachers mark the children's written work regularly using positive comments to praise and encourage the children. In many of the classes observed, the children were given more detailed advice, either through spoken or written comment, on how to improve the quality of their work. The teachers have introduced helpful assessment for learning strategies and the older children participate in peer evaluations and agree the success criteria with their teachers. This good practice should be developed more consistently throughout the school.

Over the last two years, the Principal has been instrumental in introducing a wider range of assessment procedures to obtain more detailed information about the levels of the children's attainment. This information has been used to identify priorities for whole-school development and has formed the basis of valuable staff development.

The parents are kept well informed of their children's progress through annual parental interviews and written reports.

3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The quality of the provision for special educational needs (SEN) is very good. There are effective early identification strategies in place for the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) works closely with the staff to draw up and review comprehensive individual education plans (IEPs) which are shared with the parents. The teachers and the classroom assistants provide very good in class support for the children and ensure the tasks and activities set are well matched to their needs, abilities and interests. There is clear evidence of targets being met and new, more challenging targets being set. In the withdrawal sessions with the SENCO, the children were very well motivated, were encouraged to develop and use appropriate strategies to read and write words and to develop their fluency and understanding. The sessions were well planned, related to the ongoing class work and were informed by the IEPs. A number of the children have made significant progress and have been removed from the SEN register.

The SENCO has developed very good links with the LSC and contributes to the drawing up of IEPs for the children attending the centre. She also works closely with outside agencies to enhance the provision for the children who require further support.

The parents are also supported through the Extended Schools Programme which provides a course on helping children experiencing difficulties with Literacy and Numeracy.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The Principal has been in post for just under three years and during this time he has introduced many positive changes to enhance the quality of provision in the school. He has demonstrated outstanding leadership to date and has an appropriate vision for the school with a clear understanding of how to achieve this. He is highly reflective in his work and fosters a culture of self-evaluation leading to improvement. The SDP meets fully the requirements of the Department of Education School Development Planning Regulations/Schedule 2005/19.

Under the guidance of the Principal the leadership team have appropriately prioritised raising attainment as an area for improvement; in particular, they are using performance data to identify groups of children, across all ability levels, who are under-performing. There is a need for the KS2 teachers, in particular, to focus more on improving the end of key stage outcomes, so that this more accurately reflects the children's abilities and wider achievements.

The Principal works closely with the teacher in charge of the LSC who has developed a useful policy to guide the work in the centre. Strong links have been developed with a range of appropriate external support agencies.

4.2 STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The Principal is committed to his own and the staff's professional development. Key roles in the school have been identified and developed over the last three years and all staff are motivated and enabled to provide high quality teaching and good learning experiences for the children.

4.3 ACCOMMODATION

The school celebrated its 40th Anniversary in 2009 and is in need of extensive refurbishment and repair. Very good use is made of all the available space in the school and the staff work hard to create bright and inviting classrooms and corridors celebrating the children's work. The standard of caretaking is very good.

4.4 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The school works very hard to ensure the children receive a broad and varied programme within the confines of a restricted budget. During the last three years a large investment was made in upgrading the ICT provision in the school and the parents, the staff and friends of the school made a major contribution to this. The school has a good range of resources to support the children with their learning, the activity areas within the FS provide very good opportunities for the children to learn in a stimulating and enriching environment.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the outstanding quality of the pastoral care demonstrated by the well motivated children, whose behaviour and attitude to learning was always exemplary;
- the quality of the teaching observed, most of which was good or better and in a minority of the lessons was outstanding;
- the clear focus on school improvement through the effective analysis of data and the positive impact this is having on raising the standards of literacy and numeracy for the children;
- the very good quality of the support provided for all of the children with diverse or special educational needs;

- the outstanding leadership provided by the Principal to date, and the hard-working and dedicated staff, and
- the very effective links the school has forged with external agencies and the local community.

5.2 The area for improvement is:

- To continue to focus more sharply on raising achievement to ensure that each child reaches their full potential.

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 areas for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the school's progress on the area for improvement.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- A risk assessment of access control into and out of the school is required.
- The school lacks disability access.
- The classroom doors lack windows.
- There is inadequate storage space.
- The steep steps up to the main entrance of the school lack hand rails.
- Drainage problems from the upper playing field have led to water running over the steps turning to frost in winter causing erosion.
- The seals on the high retaining wall on the main pathway into the school are broken, the plaster is decaying and this poses a serious health and safety risk.
- There is major subsidence in the play areas which are trip hazards for the children.
- Two classrooms are affected constantly by effluent and intolerable odours.

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