

PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Mary's Primary School and
Nursery Unit, Granemore,
Armagh

Report of an Inspection in
October 2013

eti

*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*

Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



Quantitative terms

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%

Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels in reports:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

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1. Inspection method and evidence base

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of primary schools, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self-evaluation* at: <http://www.eti.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-primary.htm>.

Inspectors observed teaching and learning, scrutinised documentation and the children's written work and held formal and informal discussions with children, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with representatives from the governors;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents (Primary)	106	28	26%	13
Parents (NU)	*	*	7%	*
Teaching Staff	9	6	67%	*
Teaching Support	6	6	100%	*
Support Staff	4	*	75%	*

* fewer than 5

Almost all the responses from the parental questionnaires of the primary school praised the dedicated and caring staff and the preparation made for the children transferring to the next stage of education. The matters raised in the questionnaires were discussed with the principal and the representative of the Board of Governors.

2. Context

St Mary's Primary School and Nursery Unit is situated in a rural setting approximately two miles from Keady. The enrolment has increased over the past three years; there are currently 171 children in the primary school and 27 children in the nursery unit which provides a full-time session. All of the children come from the surrounding area.

St Mary's Primary School and Nursery Unit	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Enrolment	173	185	196	198
% Attendance (NI Average)	96%	96%	96%	96%
FSME Percentage ¹	13%	19%	23%	21%
% (No) of children on SEN register	12%	9%	7%	11%
No. of children with statements of educational needs	7	6	5	5
No. of newcomers	0	0	0	0

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

¹ The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy, in particular, how the school is addressing low attainment and underachievement where applicable;
- the quality of provision in the school and nursery unit; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

4. Overall finding

Overall Performance Level	Very Good
Achievements and Standards	Very Good
Provision	Very Good
Leadership and Management	Very Good
Nursery Unit	Good

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children in the school are well motivated and engage fully in their learning. They enjoy working together in pairs and groups and interact respectfully with their peers. By the end of key stage (KS) 2, the most able children are able to transfer their skills and knowledge to other meaningful activities and make independent, informed choices.
- An analysis of the end of key stage (KS) 2 performance data over three years* indicates that in English the school's performance is well above both the Northern Ireland (NI) average and that of schools in the same free schools meals (FSM) category. In mathematics, the school is above the Northern Ireland (NI) average and that of schools in the same free school meals category over the same three year period.
- The school's internal performance data shows that almost all of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make very good progress in English and mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation.
- Across the school, the children demonstrate high standards of talking and listening skills and are confident in expressing their ideas and opinions through extended oral responses. Writing is of a high standard and as they progress through the school, the children are developing a wide range of writing styles for

* Due to the current transition period in the arrangements for statutory assessment, this analysis of the end of KS2 performance data is based on the outcomes up to but not including the 2012/13 school year.

a variety of audiences and purposes. The children talk with enthusiasm about their books and read with fluency, accuracy and expression. The children have a good mathematical understanding and by the end of KS2, the most able children can apply and use their mathematical skills and knowledge with accuracy and flexibility.

- The children in the nursery unit are developing their independence and most of them remain at the play activities for a sustained period. They co-operate well with the routines of the day and demonstrate very good social skills. The children listen attentively to group stories and participate well during singing and rhyme time.
- From an early age, the children use information and communication technology (ICT) with developing confidence and independence. The school has participated in the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) information and communication technology (ICT) accreditation and the children achieve well above the Northern Ireland (NI) average.

6. Provision

- The quality of the teaching observed during the inspection ranged from good to outstanding; the majority of the lessons were very good or better. The teachers value the children's ideas and build on their interests to enable them to work creatively and develop further their imagination. The use of effective questioning extends the children's thinking and oral responses. The staff have appropriately identified the need to use assessment information more effectively to differentiate the learning for the children. The staff make effective use of the facilities available but the limited area within the classrooms restricts the development of active learning and practical activities.
- The school identifies appropriately, at an early stage, children who require additional support with aspects of their learning. A range of well designed intervention strategies are in place to address the children's learning needs and the work is guided by effective education plans. The children are involved in recognising their own learning needs and achieving individual learning targets.
- The school has actively nurtured the children's enjoyment of literacy and numeracy. A particular feature of the literacy programme is the planned approach to foster an appreciation of poetry; by the end of KS 2, the children are able to write their own poems with skill and imagination. Key reading skills are taught in a systematic and organised way and the provision of a broad range of reading material for school and home use extends the children's reading experiences. In numeracy, the school has appropriately identified the need to transfer the application of mathematical skills and knowledge to real life meaningful contexts.
- The quality of the provision in the nursery unit is good. The broad and balanced programme provides satisfactory to good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The staff are developing their approaches to planning and assessment to inform further their teaching and learning.

- The provision for pastoral care within the primary school and the nursery unit is of a very good quality. There is an inclusive and welcoming ethos and the children and staff work in an atmosphere of mutual respect. During the inspection, the children's behaviour was excellent. They talk enthusiastically about their involvement in the School Council and how they are able to contribute to improvement in the school.
- The school and nursery unit give very good attention to healthy eating and physical activity both through the curriculum and a range of after school activities.

7. Leadership and management

- The Principal, senior leadership team and co-ordinators provide a strategic approach to school improvement which is child-centred and clearly focused on improving teaching and learning to raise further the standards achieved by all the children. Leadership and management at all levels have worked in a collaborative manner to implement change in a systematic and well-paced approach. A particular feature of the improvement programme is the planned approach to encourage the children to enjoy and value their learning experiences in the school.
- The school improvement process is clearly linked to a well-constructed school development plan which is underpinned by a rigorous self-evaluation. There are comprehensive arrangements for all sectors in the school community to contribute to the improvement process. The school's performance data is used very effectively to monitor the children's learning and to set priorities for future development.
- The school has very effective links with parents and the local community. A key strength is the school's involvement in a learning community cluster with eight other local primary schools and a local post-primary school, to support quality transition experiences between the primary and post-primary schools.
- The Board of Governors of the school is shared with another local primary school. Based on the evidence presented at the time of the inspection, the parents, staff and school community can have a high degree of confidence in the aspects of the governance evaluated. The governors are actively involved in the school development planning process and provide a challenge function in relation to standards and achievements, finance and the curriculum. The governors are also actively pursuing matters relating to accommodation and health and safety.
- 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 relevant department. During the year 6 interview, the children reported that they feel safe and secure in school and know who to speak to if they have any concerns about their safety and well-being.

8. Conclusion

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

Accommodation

- The restrictive size of the classrooms and communal areas impacts negatively on aspects of the children's learning.

Health and safety

- The following issues need to be addressed as a matter of urgency:
 - the septic tank beside the nursery unit and adjacent to the infant playground is leaking and presents as a health hazard;
 - there are no secure access controls on the main school building or temporary classrooms;
 - there are no toilet facilities in almost all of the temporary classrooms; and
 - there is no fire escape signage on the external fire doors of the main school building and the fire bell cannot be heard from the temporary classrooms.

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