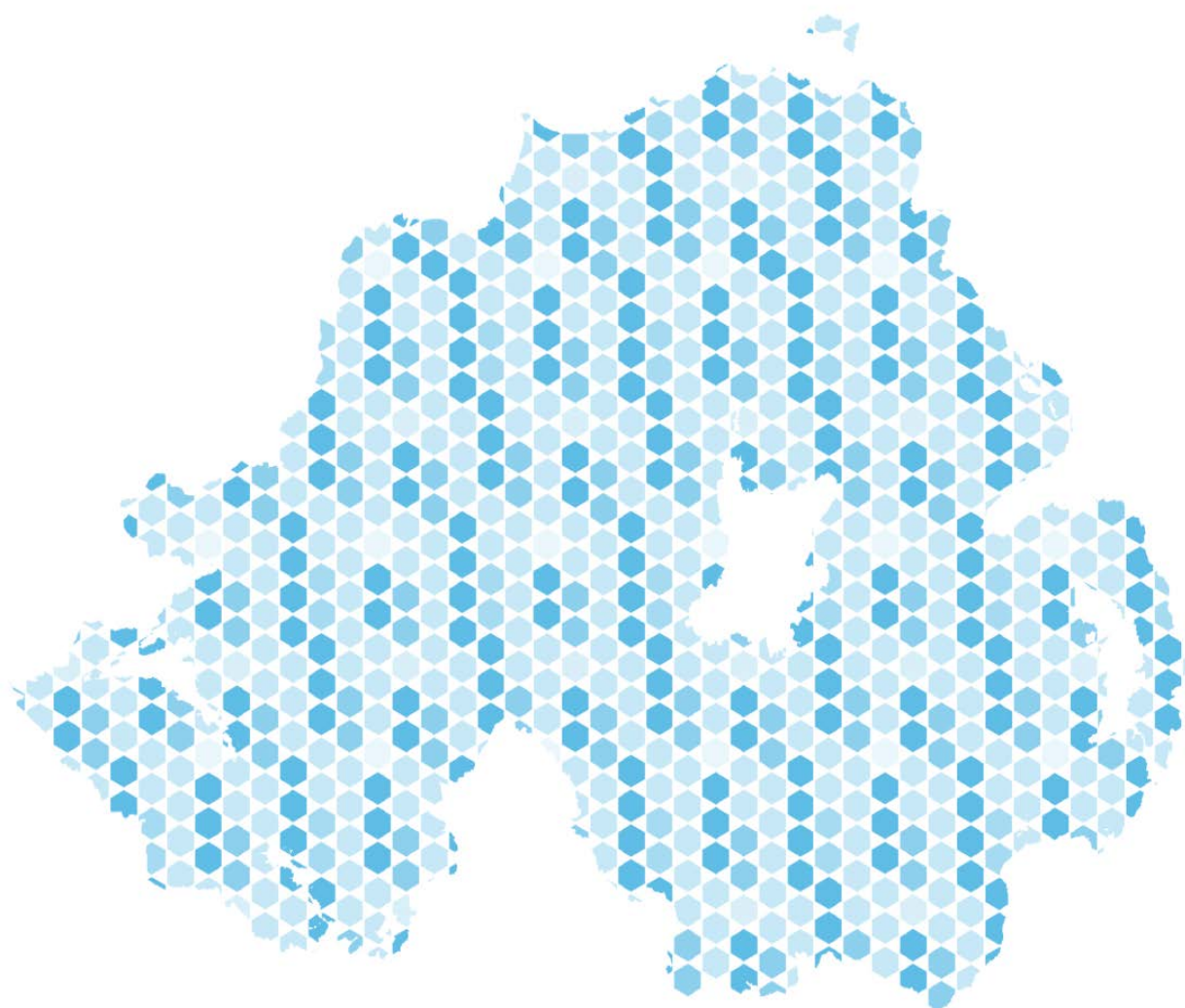


PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Mary's Primary School,
Cloughcor, Strabane,
Co Tyrone

Report of an Inspection in
May 2015

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

Five per cent of the parents responded to the questionnaires and indicated high levels of satisfaction with the school. In particular, the parents highlighted their appreciation of the kind and caring ethos of the school, and the high standards attained by the children. There were no staff responses to the questionnaires. The ETI has reported the results of the questionnaires, including comments, to the principal and the representatives of the governors.

2. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

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

3. Context

St Mary's Primary School, Cloughcor is situated three miles from Strabane in a rural location, and has a wide catchment area. The enrolment has fluctuated slightly in recent years and currently stands at 199 children. The main school building accommodates three classrooms and a community playgroup; in addition there are four demountable classrooms, and a network of outdoor play areas to provide for all the key stages.

St Mary's Primary School	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	202	198	188	199
% Attendance	94.6%	93.9%	94.3%	94.6%
FSME Percentage ¹	27.7%	27.7%	30.3%	35.1%
% of children on SEN register	18.8%	14.1%	18.6%	14.5%
No. of children with statements of educational needs	*	*	*	*
No. of newcomers	*	*	*	*

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall Performance Level	Good
Achievements and Standards	Very good
Provision	Good
Leadership and Management	Good

5. Achievements and standards

- The behaviour of the children around the school is very good; they are helpful and co-operative in their engagement with one another and with adults. In lessons, almost all of the children demonstrate highly positive dispositions for learning and work well independently.
- The school's internal performance data shows that in key stage two, most of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, are achieving in line with their ability or above expectation in English and mathematics. By year 7, almost all make very good progress in English and mathematics.
- In the foundation stage, the children talk with enthusiasm about their learning; the children are developing very well their oral language, listening skills and their understanding of early mathematical concepts and the use of associated language. The children engage eagerly in the learning activities and their imaginative, exploratory and creative play is developing very well.
- By year 7, the children read very well with fluency and expression and are able to give their opinions about characters and plots from their reading books and a wide range of novels. Across the key stages the children display high levels of interest in reading for enjoyment. The quality of the children's writing is good with most of the children confident in using a variety of written forms and when expressing their opinions.

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

- The children have a very good understanding of key concepts across the mathematics curriculum. They work well with one another in paired and group work and when given the opportunity, display good teamwork skills. The children's mental mathematics strategies are developing effectively, and support well their learning and thinking in mathematics.
- The children demonstrate good levels of competence in information and communication technology and there are skilful examples of their work in their books and displays throughout the school.

6. Provision

- In the most effective practice, the teachers use a very good variety of learning and teaching strategies, together with clear learning intentions, paced well for the needs of the children. In a minority of classes the teachers' short-term planning identifies clearly the intended learning and differentiated activities for the range of ability within the class; these effective approaches need to be implemented consistently in the school. In addition, the majority of teachers need to improve further the level of detail in their medium-term planners.
- In improving the teaching and learning further, it will be important for all the teachers to give a higher priority to developing more fully the children's thinking skills through more open-ended and challenging activities, and providing more frequent structured opportunities for the children to reflect on and assess their learning.
- The children's work is marked regularly and positively, however, assessment for learning is at an early stage of development and a more systematic approach is required to ensure that feedback given to the children enables them to improve the quality of their work.
- The provision for the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning is good. In the most effective practice the teachers outline clearly-defined targets within individual education plans that are monitored thoroughly and evaluated regularly to plan for further progression; this practice needs to be used consistently throughout the school.
- The highly-skilled special education co-ordinator provides proficient leadership for, and advice on, the provision for special educational needs in the school. A small number of children have benefited from effective withdrawal sessions for mathematics.
- The school's programme for language and literacy is of good quality and outlines progression in talking and listening, reading and writing. Throughout the school, the teachers provide a well-planned guided reading programme where children develop effectively their fluency and enjoyment of reading using a wide range of banded reading books, class novels, and guided reading activities.

- In a significant minority of classes from key stage one, the children spend too much time on de-contextualised grammar exercises; the staff need to provide the children with more opportunities for independent, creative writing across the curriculum. The teachers also need to ensure the consistent implementation of the school's handwriting programme to enable the children to improve the presentation of their written work.
- Overall, the children experience a balanced mathematics programme. In the foundation stage; the teachers often introduce mathematical concepts and ideas naturally and skilfully through play and regular routines. As they progress through the school, the children frequently complete worksheet-type tasks which do not always match well their individual needs or include sufficient opportunity for the children to apply their knowledge and skills through open-ended investigative approaches.
- In the most effective practice, in half of the mathematics lessons observed, the learning activities contained well-planned challenge and progression and the teachers met the children's varying needs and interests well. In these lessons, the teachers used effective questioning to extend the children's thinking and check the depth of their understanding of important mathematical concepts and processes; the school needs to address the inconsistency in the quality of the children's mathematical learning experiences across the key stages and disseminate more consistently the good practice within the school.
- Pastoral care is of a high quality. There are good levels of respect among all members of the school community. The promotion of positive behaviour is very effective and the children's personal and academic achievements are recognised and rewarded regularly, for example, through the 'Principal's Party' initiative. The children have very good opportunities to take on roles of responsibility through the eco-committee.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity thereby encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles through, for example, the focus on healthy breaks and lunches, and the good range of sporting activities in which the children may participate.

7. Leadership and management

- The principal and vice-principal have a clear focus on the development of key curriculum areas within the school, and a thorough comprehension of internal data to inform action to improve the children's learning and attainments. There is rigorous assessment, tracking and analysis of the children's progress, with skilful identification of potential underachievement.
- A comprehensive school development plan has been developed through wide-ranging consultation including parents and staff, with effective associated action plans. The actions focused on the reduction of underachievement in numeracy have been successful.

- Currently, the principal and vice-principal hold the majority of key curricular and safeguarding responsibilities. The leadership team has identified appropriately the need to have greater parity of roles, to revise the distribution of co-ordinator duties and to build further the capacity of the co-ordinators to lead and develop their areas of responsibility.
- There is a further need for the leadership team, with curriculum co-ordinators, to evaluate a greater range of first-hand evidence to assess the provision and disseminate the most effective practice for learning and teaching within the school.
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors provide scrutiny of the school development plan, and school resources, and afford appropriate challenge for the school management team. They have identified appropriately the need to be involved further in professional development opportunities alongside the staff.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. In discussions with the inspectors, the year 6 children reported that they feel safe in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their well-being.

8. 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 areas for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address.

The areas for improvement are:

- for the teachers to develop a shared understanding of what constitutes effective learning and teaching, and to disseminate the highly effective practice within the school, and
- for the school management to appoint and develop a team of co-ordinators, skilled in leading, monitoring and evaluating their areas of responsibility.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor, through district inspection activity, the school's progress on the areas for improvement.

Health and safety

1. The employing authority and board of governors need to address urgently the provision of safer access arrangements to the demountable classrooms.

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