

PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Patrick's Primary School and
Nursery Unit, Castleberg,
Co Tyrone

Report of an Inspection in
November 2014

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*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.etini.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.

Thirteen parents of the primary school and nursery unit children responded to the questionnaires of which nine included written comments. Most of the responses were positive about the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted their appreciation of the caring staff, the level of educational support and the inclusive ethos of the school. All comments were discussed with the senior management team and the governors; and are addressed in the body of the report. Almost all of the teaching staff and the majority of the teaching support staff completed questionnaires and their responses were wholly positive.

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 including the nursery unit; and
3. the quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

St Patrick's Primary School and Nursery Unit is located in the town of Castledearg. The children are drawn from the village and the surrounding area. The school is designated as Catholic maintained and has a cross-community nursery unit attached. There has been a steady increase in the enrolment over the past four years and it is now at 247 children. In addition, the nursery unit has 47 children whose enrolment is divided between a morning session for pre-school children and an afternoon session with underage children in their penultimate pre-school year. The nursery unit teacher is recently appointed. Forty-five percent of the children attending the school are entitled to free school meals while twenty-one percent of the children have been identified as requiring support with aspects of their learning.

St Patrick's Primary School and Nursery Unit, Castlederg	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Nursery Unit Enrolment	48	51	49	47
Primary School Enrolment	202	222	225	247
% Attendance (NI Average)	95	94	94	
FSME Percentage ¹	36	41	44	45
% (No) of children on SEN register	27	27	24	21
No. of children with statements of educational needs	*	*	7	7
No. of newcomers	8	15	14	14

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

4. Overall findings of the inspection

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

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are well-motivated and display a desire to learn. They take pride in their work and their behaviour is exemplary. The children engage and collaborate well in paired and group work and are able to take responsibility to complete tasks and contribute as members of groups in a variety of roles. Their thinking skills and personal capabilities are fostered early in the nursery and effectively developed throughout the primary school.
- The schools internal performance data in key stage (KS) 2 indicates that most of the children, including those with additional needs, make very good progress in English and mathematics in line with their ability or above their expected level.
- Across the key stages, the children have acquired good talking and very good listening skills. By year 7, the most able children are able to read fluently and with very good levels of comprehension and appreciation of a variety of authors. There are variations in the standards of the children's written work and a minority of the children are capable of producing more extended and creative pieces of writing. By the end of key stage (KS) 2, the children can demonstrate a good understanding of mathematical language, and can apply appropriate strategies to solve problems. The children's flexibility in mental mathematical calculations is good.

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

- The children in the nursery unit are well-settled and the majority of them can play purposefully for sustained periods of time. They make independent choices regarding their play equipment and are confident in the routines of the nursery. A significant minority of the children have speech and language difficulties; however, they are confident in approaching adults for help and support. A small number of children are beginning to play collaboratively in the role play areas. The children enjoy browsing in books and listening to stories in small groups and would benefit from a regular whole-group story and rhyme session. The older children have a good interest in early mark making and representational drawing; they could match by colour and size and take turns in early mathematical games.
- The children enjoy and make use of information and communication technology (ICT) in a variety of settings, including video conferencing with a partner school; they research information for topic work and make digital presentations.

6. Provision

- The quality of the planning, teaching and assessment is good. The most effective practice in teaching across the school is characterised by the positive working relationships between the teaching staff and the children. There is careful preparation of attractive learning environments and resources for lessons which motivate the children to concentrate and develop a broad range of learning skills. The children's thinking is well-developed as a result of the open-ended questioning strategies used by the teachers. They give the children time to process information and they are encouraged to ask questions. In a minority of the lessons in which the teaching was less effective, the children's learning is over-directed by the teacher, there is an over-reliance on de-contextualised worksheets which is restricting the children's creativity and narrowing their learning experiences.
- The teachers' medium-term planning provides effective guidance for the progression and development of literacy and numeracy skills across the year groups. In the effective practice, the planning connects the curricular areas and builds on the children's prior learning and interests or specific learning needs. There are variations in the quality of the short-term planning. In the less effective planning there are missed opportunities to identify the intended learning, differentiation and assessment-for-learning strategies and, as a result, the teaching and learning lacks pace and challenge. The school has appropriately identified the need to implement the use of mobile digital technology to enhance further the learning experiences for the children.
- There is a comprehensive whole-school approach to the use of summative assessment of literacy and numeracy and the staff use well the information to identify children in need of additional support. There are, however, inconsistencies in the teachers' approach to marking for improvement. In the best practice, the children are informed by their teachers of their achievements and are provided with targets to aim for and strategies to improve further their work. In addition, the children are encouraged to reflect on the quality of their learning and, as they progress through the key stages, they are beginning to write self-evaluative comments on their work. There is a need for the staff to identify, disseminate and share this best practice and to strengthen the links between planning, teaching and assessment to ensure greater consistency in learning across the school.

- There is effective provision for literacy and numeracy. In literacy, the staff are diligent in ensuring that all the children access the core skills of reading and writing and there is specific attention given to the development of phonics, spelling, punctuation and grammar. In the foundation stage, the children's oratory and independent writing skills are effectively developed through well planned play and literacy lessons. The staff have identified the need to develop further a framework for writing, across the key stages, in order to plan for greater breadth and progression in the children's writing experiences in a range of genres. In numeracy, the introduction of problem solving skills, through practical mathematical activities, provides appropriate opportunities for the children to develop their skills in meaningful contexts across the curriculum. The further development and expansion of mathematics intervention programmes and involvement of parents in support of the children's learning is an appropriate strategy in order to raise further the standards.
- The children who require assistance with aspects of their learning in literacy and or numeracy are supported very well through in-class and withdrawal sessions. The children's learning is monitored and evaluated regularly to ensure progression in their work. The classroom assistants are trained to meet the children's individual needs and make a significant contribution to their learning, particularly to the improvement of the children's reading and mathematics standards through the Reading Partnership and the Mathematics Catch-Up programmes respectively. The staff collaboration and commitment to acquiring additional training in dyslexia is commendable, there is a positive impact where the teachers are adopting in-class strategies to enable the children to access reading and learning. This good practice needs to be embedded across all key stages.
- The broad and balanced range of interesting activities in the nursery unit provides good opportunities for learning in most areas of the pre-school curriculum. The quality of the staff interactions with the children is consistently very good and, in the best practice, they develop well the children's thinking, problem-solving and extend their vocabulary. The staff support very well those children with speech and language difficulties, working closely with external agencies to provide targeted support in small groups to develop both the children's speech and their understanding of instructions.
- The pastoral care is of a high quality, there is a welcoming ethos in the school. The teachers and support staff know the children very well and provide a safe and caring learning environment in which the children work well together, feel valued, and respect the views and opinions of others. In the nursery unit, the children's achievements are celebrated; the 'I can...' notice board provides an attractive visual display of the children's growing independence. The primary school children talk enthusiastically about their contributions to aspects of school life through, for example, the work of the school council. They particularly appreciate and enjoy the prize-giving assemblies and the individual class reward systems.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, through a wide range of appropriate extra-curricular activities that encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership and management of the school are focused on meeting the needs of the children and on raising further the attainment of all of the children. The vision for school improvement is based on a well-informed knowledge of the school community.
- The current school development plan (SDP) is in the first year of a three-year cycle ; it is informed through consultation with teaching staff, discussions with the children, and a focus group of parents. To improve further the quality of the provision for learning, the leadership at all levels needs to implement more robust monitoring and self-evaluation processes in order to promote continuous whole-school improvement. It will be important to ensure that the school development plan (SDP) and associated action plans are fully informed by an analysis of the complete data pertaining to all children and that there are further opportunities to consult with all of the parents.
- The leader of the nursery unit has appropriately identified the need to review the planning and assessment arrangements for the children. The current planning does not provide an appropriately differentiated programme for the large number of children who are in their penultimate pre-school year.
- The links with other schools and the after-schools programme effectively enhances the learning experiences for the children. They talk with enthusiasm about the extensive range of learning and sporting opportunities, during and outside normal school hours, which is having a positive impact on their well-being and self esteem. The school is appropriately developing further the role of the parents in support of their children's learning.
- The reconstituted board of governors provide an appropriate skills-set to meet the developmental needs of the school and the newly appointed governors have attended initial governor training related to their challenge and support role. Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. There is a need to ensure all of the governors receive the appropriate training to develop their challenge and support role, in order to address the need for further improvement in the primary school and the nursery unit. A cycle of review for all the school policies and the information for parents is required to ensure that the communications are up-to-date and reflect the current roles and responsibilities of 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 children reported that they felt very secure in school and know what to do if they had any concerns about their well-being.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school and nursery unit is good. The school and nursery unit have important strengths in most of their educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified the following area for improvement which the school and nursery unit have demonstrated the capacity to address.

- To identify and disseminate further the best practice in learning, teaching and assessment strategies in order to improve further the quality of the children's learning experiences and the standards they achieve.

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

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