

PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Patrick's Primary School
and Nursery Unit, Rasharkin,
Co Antrim

Report of an Inspection in
November 2014

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

Almost all of the staff completed questionnaires and their responses were very positive; they emphasised that they had participated in staff training and are aware of the school's procedures relating to safeguarding. They also reported that they review regularly the children's progress and provide guidance on how they can make progress. A small number of parents completed the questionnaire and a majority of the responses indicated high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. However, a minority of responses, including half of those who made written comments, indicated that they were not content with aspects of the work of the school. In particular, they expressed the view that they needed to be better informed of their child's progress, the learning activities planned for their child and the arrangements for reporting any concerns or complaints they may have. ETI has reported to the principal and a representative of the board of governors the main issues emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

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 in the school and the nursery unit; and
3. the quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

St Patrick's Primary School and Nursery Unit is situated in the village of Rasharkin. A majority of the children who attend the school live in the village and the remainder come from the surrounding rural area and travel to it by bus and car. The enrolment has fluctuated over the last four years and currently stands at 209 children, including the 27 children who attend the Nursery Unit. In the same four-year period, the percentage of children entitled to free school meals, the percentage of children on the Special Educational Needs Register and the number of newcomer children have all risen.

St Patrick's Primary School and Nursery Unit	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	205	223	217	209
% Attendance (NI Average)	95.6%	95.0%	96.1%	97.4%
FSME Percentage ¹	21.5%	31.8%	33.0%	33.7%
% (No) of children on SEN register	6.8%	13.0%	20.4%	18.8%
No. of children with statements of educational needs	8	6	*	*
No. of newcomers	19	33	34	32

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

4. Overall findings of the inspection

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

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are highly-motivated and engage enthusiastically with their learning. They participate effectively in group and paired work, and display high levels of independence; in particular, they respond very positively to opportunities which extend their thinking and enable them to be creative.
- The school's internal assessment data shows that almost all children make very good progress in English and mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation.
- Across the school, the children have very good listening skills and express themselves confidently through meaningful class and group discussions. The children read fluently, with expression and display consistent levels of interest in reading for enjoyment. The quality and accuracy of the children's written work across the curriculum is of a very high standard showing progress across the three key stages.
- Most children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are making very good progress in their learning.

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

- Most of the children in the nursery unit are making very good progress in all aspects of the pre-school curriculum. The small number of children who still require support with their attention, language and social skills are making good progress with the skilful support of the staff. The children are settled and almost all engage in concentrated and productive play. They are developing well their skills, knowledge and understanding of the world around them in line with the pre-school curricular guidance and have positive attitudes and dispositions for learning.
- The children use information and communication technology confidently to enhance their learning; for example, they engage in meaningful research and present their ideas in a variety of forms. In key stage two, they have opportunities to explore programming and animation using appropriate software.

6. Provision

- The teachers' planning is comprehensive and rigorous; it is well-informed by the evaluation of the children's previous learning and the teachers' knowledge of the children's needs. Most of the learning and teaching was of a very high quality. The teachers build effectively on prior learning, ensure appropriate pace and challenge and enable the children to make relevant and meaningful connections across the curriculum. The teachers create a supportive environment which underpins a clear focus on learning. A strength of the learning is the development of the children's ability to self- and peer-assess.
- The children who require additional support with aspects of literacy are identified early and benefit from effective intervention strategies. The work of the staff is guided by the well-focused individual education plans and supported effectively by the classroom assistants.
- The children develop the core literacy skills in a systematic manner as they progress through the school. The programme for the development of the children's reading is thorough and well-structured ensuring that the children use an appropriate range of strategies and experience a range of genres. The highly effective teaching of writing is a particular strength in the school; the children have very good opportunities to plan, edit and redraft their work and to write in meaningful contexts across the curriculum. The play-based learning sessions are well-planned and provide the children with valuable opportunities to use and develop their language and literacy skills.
- The pre-school programme is well planned and evaluated rigorously to provide a stimulating and well balanced curriculum. The learning environment is set out in well resourced areas for play which support effectively the children's own choices and independence. The staff are skilful in developing purposeful play; they extend the children's language, thinking, independence and social skills as they interact with them through the play. The staff have prioritised the continued development of the learning experiences outdoors as a key area for further action.
- The quality of arrangements for pastoral care in the school and the nursery unit is outstanding. The school and the nursery unit have an inclusive and respectful ethos with very good working relationships between the children and staff. The strengths of the provision include the range of developments to ensure an

inclusive environment for newcomer children and the joint activities with the local controlled school, many of which are arranged through the auspices of the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education programme. The nurturing and supportive environment in the nursery unit provides the children with a positive start to their education. In 2012, the school was successful in extending its recognition as an Investors in People organisation.

- The school promotes healthy eating and physical activity through, for example, the healthy eating policy and the range of sports available to the children, thereby encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- Leadership and management at all levels in the school work conscientiously with the common purpose of improving the standards achieved by the children. A clear direction is set for the work of the teaching and non-teaching staff. In recent years, the staff have developed collaboratively suitable characteristics of best practice. The senior leadership team have subsequently used the characteristics successfully to guide their monitoring and evaluation of the children's work linked with the teachers' planning. The self-evaluation process is enhanced effectively by audits of the views of children, parents, teachers and support staff, which inform appropriately the three-year cycle of development planning.
- The current school development plan is comprehensive and has associated action plans addressing suitable priorities, including ones in the key areas of literacy and numeracy. The annual evaluation of the action plans is thorough and informs the following year's priorities for action.
- The school makes very good use of external professional development programmes, for example, the Special Educational Needs Continuous Professional Development Literacy Project led by St Mary's and Stranmillis University Colleges and the Early Years Special Education Pilot. The leadership and management ensure that the strategies are disseminated and embedded effectively throughout the school.
- The school has developed an appropriate Tackling Low- and Under-achievement Policy. The outworking of this policy is underpinned strongly by the teachers' effective use of performance data to monitor and track the progress of the children.
- The nursery unit is managed and valued as an integral part of the whole school community. There is clear evidence of ongoing improvements and appropriate staff development leading to increased staff capacity and expertise within the nursery.
- There are suitable arrangements in place for consulting with and reporting to parents that involves them in their child's education. The parents are well informed of the life and work of the school through a monthly news sheet.
- 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. It is appropriate that the governors plan to develop further their monitoring of the progress made by all children as the teachers continue to address the children's barriers to learning.

- 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 secure in school and knew what to do if they had any concerns about their well-being.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The school has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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