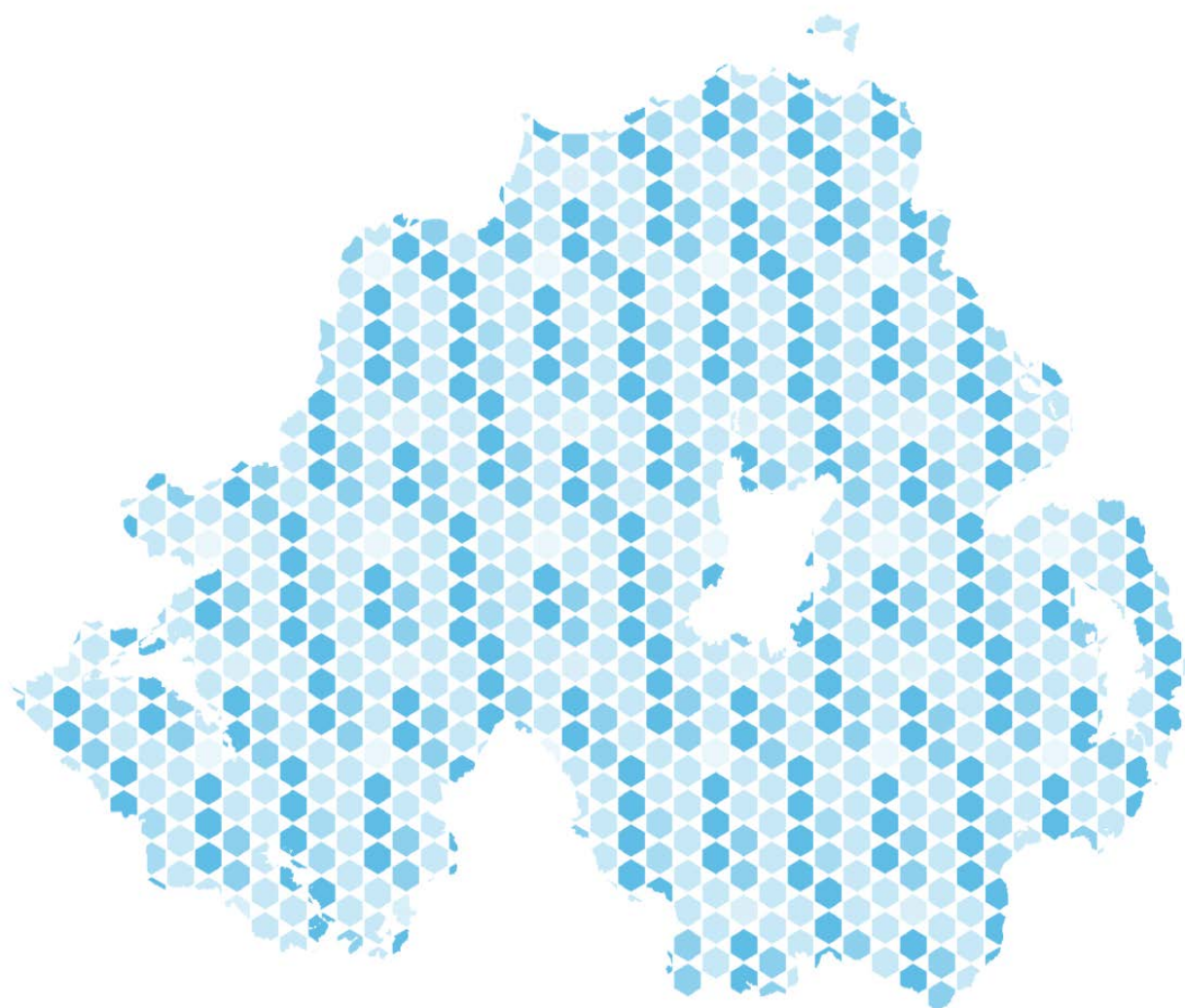


PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Patrick's Primary School,
Belfast

Report of an Inspection in
January 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
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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.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 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.

A small number of parents responded to the questionnaire and almost all indicated very high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents appreciated the work of the teachers and support staff, the regular information they receive about their child's progress and the high regard with which the school is held in the local community. Twenty-five percent of the staff completed a questionnaire and most of their responses were positive and, in particular, emphasised the inclusive and welcoming ethos of the school. ETI has reported to the principal and the chair of the board of governors the main issues emerging from the questionnaires.

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 the provision in literacy and numeracy in the school; and
3. the quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

In September 2013, Edmund Rice Boys' Primary School and Star of the Sea Girls' Primary School were amalgamated to form St Patrick's Primary School. The new school operates on a junior and senior split site arrangement and occupies the sites of the two former primary schools. The schools are situated on parallel streets off the Antrim Road in north Belfast. The principal was appointed in April 2013 in preparation for the opening of the new school and a new vice-principal was appointed in May 2013. The children attending the school come from the local catchment area within the Parish of St Patrick's. The school has placed an emphasis on providing a nurturing and child-centred environment for the children.

St Patrick's Primary School	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	-	-	549	529
% Attendance (NI Average)	-	-	93.5	94.9
FSME Percentage ¹	-	-	79.4	78.6
% (No) of children on SEN register	-	-	36	34
No. of children with statements of educational needs	-	-	21	18
No. of newcomers	-	-	23	24

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

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are welcoming and friendly and their behaviour is excellent in the classrooms and shared areas. They settle quickly to their learning tasks and are willing to help each other with their work. The children are confident and respectful in engaging with peers and adults and respond well to the positive ethos in all of the classrooms.
- The school's internal performance data indicates that most of the children make good progress in English and mathematics, in line with their ability or above expectation.
- The standards achieved by the children in literacy and mathematics are good. The most able children in year 7 read with fluency and talk enthusiastically about their favourite authors and personal reading preferences. In the foundation stage (FS), the children are developing a good range of vocabulary and use a range of strategies, including phonological awareness and sight reading, to help them read and write unfamiliar words. When given the opportunity, the children in key stage (KS) 1 and KS2 produce good examples of writing. Throughout the school, the children should be given further opportunities to write in different styles for a range of audiences, and attention should be given to improving the quality and consistency of handwriting and presentation. By year 7, the most able children demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of key concepts across the mathematics curriculum. They complete calculations with good levels of speed and accuracy, and show flexibility in applying a range of mental mathematics strategies to solve problems and complete investigations. To build on this good work and raise further the children's standards in mathematics, the teachers need to plan opportunities for the children to apply their learning across the curriculum in meaningful contexts.

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

- Children identified as having individual educational needs engage very well with their learning support programmes, make very good progress and take pride in their achievements. The provision in the nurturing 'Sunshine' rooms has a significant and very positive impact on the children's self-esteem, personal and social skills and learning.
- Most of the children attain good standards in information and communication technology (ICT); examples of their work are displayed throughout the school and evident in their books. The children's learning would benefit from more opportunities to use ICT in a wider range of contexts.

6. Provision

- The staff are highly committed to providing high quality education for the children in the local community. In the most effective practice, the lessons are well-managed and well-paced, with challenging activities for the children. Learning is based on the children's prior knowledge and set within relevant real life contexts. The children are actively involved in their learning, and skilful questioning by the teacher provides opportunities to extend the children's understanding. The wide range of complex children's needs in the classroom is supported by meaningful differentiated learning activities. The plenary sessions are used effectively to assess and consolidate learning. The classroom assistants provide valuable and skilled support for the children and work well as a team with the teachers. In the less effective practice, over direction by the teacher restricts the children's opportunities to be creative, develop decision making skills and manage their own learning. In order to improve further the quality of the children's learning, there is a need to disseminate the more effective teaching and learning strategies in the school. A particular focus should be placed on a whole school approach to developing further the children's active involvement in their own learning through, for example, the setting and achieving of individual goals, reflecting on their own and others' work and suggesting ways in which it may be improved.
- A key priority identified in the school development planning process is the need to review the medium term planning throughout the school to ensure consistency of approach with challenge and progression in the children's learning. The teachers' evaluations need to focus more sharply on the children's learning to inform future practice. The children's work is marked regularly with positive comments and, in the best practice, the feedback provides meaningful support for the children to help them improve the quality of their own work.
- The staff place a high priority on meeting the needs of children requiring additional support with their learning. There is a range of provision including well-tailored withdrawal, support from external agencies and two nurturing 'Sunshine' rooms for children in KS1 and KS2. There are clear procedures in place for early identification of children who may need support and individual education plans are in place to support learning in the mainstream classes and the small group sessions. The staff have identified appropriately the need to monitor and review the effectiveness of these plans in improving the children's skills, dispositions and learning.

- Children who speak English as an additional language are integrated well into the life and work of the school. As the numbers and diversity of these children increase there will be a need to keep the provision under review to ensure it supports the children in realising their potential.
- In literacy, the children acquire systematically the core reading skills. The school has invested effectively in further reading resources to ensure access to a broad range of reading material for the children. The children's acquisition of appropriate grammar and punctuation is a core element of the writing programme. To build on this good practice, the teachers should plan further opportunities to encourage the transfer of these core skills into a range of independent writing to further improve the standard of the children's work. In mathematics, across all the key stages, the children show a high level of enjoyment and engagement in their mathematical activities and are developing a very positive attitude to this core curriculum area.
- In play-based learning, the younger children use confidently a range of practical resources and engage well in suitable play-based activities to develop a good understanding of core curriculum areas including reading, writing, talking and listening, number, shape and pattern. The staff interactions extend the children's vocabulary and encourage them to explain their thinking. The school has appropriately identified the need to develop further the provision for outdoor play.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is very good. There is an evident caring and inclusive ethos throughout the school. The children benefit from their active involvement in the school council and talk, in a logical and articulate manner, about their opinions being sought and listened to by the staff. There is a range of positive reward systems in operation, both at an individual and whole-school level, which place a high and appropriate value on the children's efforts.
- The recent measures taken to improve the children's attendance rates are well-conceived and linked effectively with the school's pastoral work. Attendance rates have improved further since the measures were implemented.
- The school gives outstanding attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity thereby encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- Since the amalgamation, there has been considerable reorganisation of the key leadership roles and responsibilities and teaching duties. The newly-formed senior management team has worked in a well-paced and strategic manner to establish routine operational procedures and put in place an effective school improvement process. Curriculum teams have been established and are developing well core aspects of the curriculum in a systematic manner. The comprehensive school development plan identifies appropriately key priorities for further improvement. A range of professional development opportunities, linked closely to the key identified areas, has been facilitated by the school. It will be important, as part of the school improvement process, to develop, at all levels, more rigorous, regular and consistent monitoring and evaluating procedures using all available qualitative and quantitative to assess the quality of the children's learning experiences and attainment.

- The school engages successfully with the wider community by hosting the New Lodge Schools' Cluster Classes which are provided in partnership with a local college of further education. The availability of adjacent crèche facilities is a significant factor in supporting parents and carers in attending the accredited courses, many of which are designed to assist parents in supporting their children's learning. The school has very effective links with the local feeder nursery schools and post-primary schools.
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, ETI's evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The board of governors has been fully involved in the amalgamation process and understands fully the opportunities and challenges facing the new school.
- 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 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 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 area for improvement is:

- to develop further a strategic and rigorous system of monitoring and evaluating at all levels, using qualitative and quantitative data to inform the planning, teaching and learning, improve the provision and raise further the standards across the curriculum.

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

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