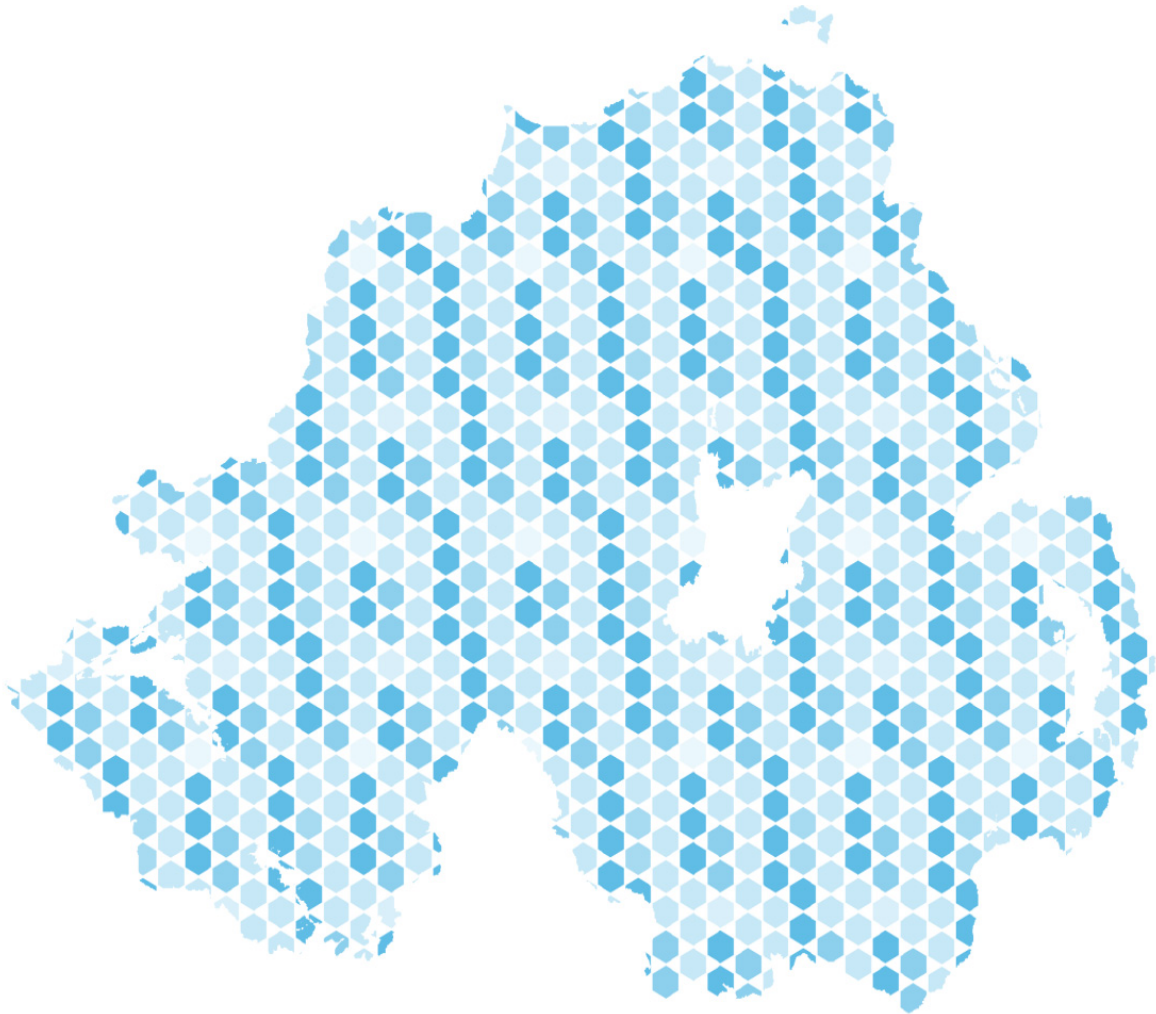


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Patrick's Primary School,
Newtownstewart

Report of an Inspection
in October 2011



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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%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: St Patrick's Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 03/10/11**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 203-6008** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Year 1 Intake	25	14	22	17	14
Enrolments					
Primary	160	145	142	124	123
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Special Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Irish Medium Unit	0	0	0	0	0

The enrolment for the current year is the figure on the day of notification of inspection. For previous years it is the figure in the annual return to the Department of Education.

The calculations at C and D should be based on the total of the primary and reception enrolments only.

- C. Average Attendance for the Previous School Year (expressed as a percentage): 95.3% **NI Avg Att: 94.7%**

Average Attendance for those children on the Special Educational Needs Register: 94.7%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit	Irish Medium Unit
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- D. i. Number of Teachers (including the principal and part-time teachers): 7 0 0 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 17.4 NI PTR: 20.2
- iii. Average Class Size: 20.5
- iv. Class Size (Range): 12 to 25
- v. Ancillary Support:
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- | | | | |
|---|--|----|--|
| i. Clerical support: | | 20 | |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support: | | 30 | |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | | 45 | |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 0%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 40.3%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age:
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 41.5%
- x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2010/11 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics, and Irish (in Irish-medium schools):
- | | | | |
|--|----------------|--------------------|--------------|
| | English | Mathematics | Irish |
| | 66.7% | 66.7% | N/A |

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Patrick's Primary School, in the parish of Ardstraw East, is situated on Dublin Street, Newtownstewart in County Tyrone. Most of the children live in the town, with approximately 15% travelling from the surrounding rural area. The enrolment of the school has decreased steadily over the past five years and currently stands at 123 children. Approximately 42% of the children are entitled to free school meals. The school has identified approximately 40% of the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning.

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy;
- the quality of provision for learning; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

In addition, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning, and the school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection were evaluated.

1.3 THE VIEWS OF THE PARENTS, TEACHERS, GOVERNORS, SUPPORT STAFF AND CHILDREN

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents, the teaching and the support staff to complete confidential questionnaires prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and a group of the children from year 6.

Eighty-one parental questionnaires were issued; approximately 50% were returned to Inspection Services Branch of which nine contained additional written comments. Almost all of the responses indicated a very high level of satisfaction with the work of the school. In particular, the parents emphasised the high quality of care and attention shown for the children's well-being by the dedicated, hard-working and enthusiastic staff, the good communication between home and school, the progress made by the children both academically and socially and the quality of support provided for the children who have special educational needs.

Six teachers and six members of the support staff completed the on-line questionnaires; there was one written comment. The responses were wholly positive.

The governors spoke very favourably about their appreciation of the work of all of the staff and their commitment to the children. They reported that they were kept well informed and involved in many school developments such as school development planning, the school budget, and the innovative approaches adopted by the staff to improve aspects of the provision both indoors and outdoors.

In discussions held with the year 6 children they talked openly and enthusiastically about their experiences in the school. They appreciate the care and supports of all the adults, value the meaningful role played by the student and class councils in representing their views, and enjoy the wide range of activities and play resources provided for them. The children indicated that they know what to do and who to turn to if they have any concerns regarding their work or their safety and well-being.

An analysis of all the questionnaires and the written comments was shared with the Principal and the governors.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for the pastoral care provision in the school is outstanding. Some of the strengths are the very good working relationships, the contribution of all the staff to the promotion and maintenance of a well organised and supportive environment for learning and the wide range of extended learning experiences provided for the children. The School Council provides the children with real and meaningful opportunities to express their views and contribute to the decision making process.

The children are very well-behaved and the school has established excellent links with the parents and the local community.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has very good arrangements in place for safeguarding the children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The schools gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, through, for example, the emphasis placed by the staff on promoting healthy snacks and nutritional choices and the regular participation by the children in physical activity.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The school has worked hard to develop very effective links with the parents and others in the community. These links include, for example, the regular provision of newsletters and information about school events, a convenient parental text messaging service, and regular opportunities for the parents to meet both formally and informally with teachers to discuss their children's progress. The school organises a good range of successful events such as parents' lunches, grandparent days and its own annual féis. There is a very supportive Parents' Support Group which raises funds to provide important additional learning resources.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

The children are very well-behaved and are responsive in all aspects of their learning and school life. They settle quickly and enthusiastically to their work and are keen to talk about their learning. They think carefully about their learning tasks, and most children can ask thoughtful questions and explain well their chosen strategies for solving problems. The

children identified with special educational needs (SEN) make very good progress in meeting the targets outlined within their individual education plans (IEPs). The children's achievements and evidence of the progression in their learning are celebrated through attractive displays of their work.

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data over the past four years shows that, with the exception of one year in which there was a smaller cohort containing a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs, the school's performance in English and mathematics is above the Northern Ireland average. Compared with schools in the same free school meals category, and with the same exception, the levels of attainment in English and mathematics are consistently well above the average. In addition, and within this smaller cohort year, the percentage of children achieving level five was well above both the Northern Ireland and same free school meals category averages.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The overall quality of the provision in English and literacy is very good.

The literacy co-ordinator provides highly effective curricular leadership. Under her direction, the teachers have reviewed the school's literacy schemes and medium-term literacy planning to ensure greater progression within classes and to improve further the literacy standards throughout the school. The English and literacy programme is appropriately broad and balanced, ensuring that literacy skills are well integrated to benefit learning across the curriculum.

The current action plan for English outlines a number of effective improvement strategies; including, the implementation of structured spelling and writing programmes throughout the school and a range of specific support approaches for particular groups of children.

In all classes, the children have very good opportunities to develop their listening and talking skills. In play-based learning in the foundation stage (FS), and in whole class group discussions in KS1 and 2, the children interact enthusiastically, collaborate well and listen attentively to the views of others. Good relationships and, effective teacher questioning, encourage all of the children to extend their vocabulary, to speak out and take on active and independent roles within small group activities.

The children are taught to read systematically across all year groups through the use of several commercial reading schemes, enhanced by a good range of other materials such as novels, story sacks and reference resources. The children in FS and KS1 are involved in a wide range of modelled and shared reading activities. They are developing good independent reading skills and read unfamiliar words well using an effective range of strategies and cues. Throughout the school, the children's interest in books is encouraged by the recent addition of a new school library facility, which extends further the range of reading choices. By the end of KS2, most of the children read with fluency and enjoyment and talk confidently about their preferred authors and genres.

The overall standard of the children's written work, including its presentation, is good or very good. In the FS, the children are encouraged to experiment and 'have a go' with letter and word formation. The most able children express their ideas and opinions in simple sentences. In KS1, the children's skills develop further and they often write in a more extended manner, responding to a varied range of stimuli including personal and school events. As they progress into KS2, there are very good opportunities for the children to master a growing variety of written forms and styles. The teachers provide effective,

systematic support to enable all of the children to spell more accurately in their independent writing. The children's writing improves well in response to regular, encouraging and constructive written comments by the teachers. There are many examples of good quality, extended and imaginative writing for a range of purposes and audiences; the standards of writing overall by the end of KS2 are high or show progress in keeping with the children's ability.

Information and communication technology is used very well to support and extend the children's literacy skills across the curriculum. The children make use of a variety of devices, software, and on line services, such as Learning NI, to research, communicate and evaluate different aspects of their learning. The children in both KS1 and KS2 are currently participating in the revised Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment ICT accreditation scheme.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The quality of provision for mathematics and numeracy is very good.

The numeracy co-ordinator provides very good leadership; she leads effectively the ongoing development of whole-school numeracy, based appropriately on self-evaluation in order to raise standards and improve the quality of the provision across all classes. She monitors regularly the quality of the mathematics provision through the sampling of the children's work, the review of teaching plans and the thorough analysis of performance data.

The staff has revised recently the scheme for mathematics to provide the children with a wide range of experiences in number, shape and space, measures and data-handling; this includes the effective use of ICT and practical equipment, and regular opportunities for the children to work in pairs and small groups. The school is planning to revise its scheme for mental mathematics; currently the teachers plan for and develop the progression of the children's mental mathematics strategies, with each lesson beginning with mental mathematics activities. ICT, including programmable devices, interactive websites and software, is used very effectively to support and enhance the children's learning.

In the youngest classes, the children's mathematical knowledge and skills are developed well through practical activities and games. The children are developing early mathematical language, have a good understanding of early mathematical concepts, and can sort, order and match number. In KS1, through the effective use of ICT and a wide range of appropriate, practical resources, the children develop a sound understanding of basic number, measures, and shape and space. In discussions with a small group of year 4 children, the children with most ability spoke confidently about their mathematics; they have a good understanding of number facts, shape and space, measures and handling data, and can use an appropriate range of mental mathematics strategies. In KS2, the children engage in a wide range of investigative tasks which extends their problem-solving skills. They are provided by their teachers with very good opportunities to apply their mathematics in a range of contexts across the curriculum and in everyday life. In discussions with the year 7 children, they demonstrated a very good understanding of place value, measures, estimation, and the properties of shapes, and showed flexibility in their mathematical thinking.

Overall, most of the children make good progress. By the end of the key stages, good standards are reached and the more able children, in particular, achieve very good standards.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The teachers have worked hard to revise the planned programmes for each year group. In the best practice, teachers have begun to complete structured evaluations of the children's learning which they use effectively to inform their future practice and the provision of appropriate learning activities. There is a need for this best practice to be disseminated to ensure a sharper focus on differentiation to match the varied needs of all the children within each class. The school has identified appropriately the need to develop further the planning for the children's outdoor learning experiences.

3.2 TEACHING

The quality of most of the teaching observed was good to outstanding, with the majority being good or very good. In the best practice observed, the staff engaged very effectively with the children and generated and sustained their interest. In these lessons, the teaching was well-paced, provided all the children with appropriate levels of challenge and extended their thinking skills well through investigative and collaborative activities. The teachers made meaningful links with prior learning, discussed and agreed the learning intentions and success criteria with the children and revisited these effectively at various stages of the lesson. They focused carefully on the quality of the children's responses and turned these skilfully into opportunities for further learning. In the lessons which were less effective, there was insufficient focus on meeting the specific learning needs of all of the children. These lessons also lacked pace and challenge and opportunities were lost to extend the children's learning.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

Led by the assessment co-ordinator, the teachers employ a good range of appropriate strategies to evaluate the quality and extent of the children's learning. The Principal and the literacy, numeracy, assessment and special educational needs co-ordinators have engaged very comprehensively in a rigorous analysis of standardised testing data. They use the information about the children's progress in a good variety of ways to respond to their various needs. The assessment co-ordinator, with the other co-ordinators, uses very effectively this performance data to inform the setting of individual and whole-school targets for improvement in literacy and numeracy.

In all classes, the teachers mark the children's work regularly and diligently. Most of the teachers provide clear, well-focused written comments for the children to help them improve the quality of their work. This very good practice needs to be shared across all the classes.

The parents are kept well informed about their children's progress through an annual progress meeting with the class teacher and through an annual written progress report. Due to the parental responses to a recent school survey, the progress meetings will become bi-annual.

3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The quality of the provision for children with special educational needs (SEN) is very good.

The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) provides highly effective leadership in SEN; she provides excellent support for the staff and focuses on early identification and intervention strategies. The school uses a wide and appropriate range of diagnostic testing, together with the teachers' observations, to identify early those children requiring additional support with their learning.

The current provision is mainly through in-class support, with a few of the children receiving withdrawal support for numeracy and literacy. Information and communication technology is used very effectively to promote the children's learning in both literacy and numeracy. The learning support assistants provide sensitive, valuable and well-directed support and contribute significantly to the children's overall progress.

The SENCO liaises with the class teachers in the preparation of individual education plans for each child; these plans are very good and are reviewed regularly. All of the children respond positively, make very good progress in their learning and integrate well in classroom activities. Progress is shared regularly with the children and their parents.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is very good.

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The Principal has been in post for 19 years. He provides effective strategic leadership underpinned by his commitment to meeting the needs of, and raising the standards for, all of the children, as well as to the continued development of the school in the community. He knows the children well and has high ambitions for their individual achievements.

The staff works effectively as a team to agree and ensure developments in teaching and learning. This teamwork has been very successful in promoting a collegial approach to school development and decision making and to ensuring high quality outcomes for the children. These arrangements have been consolidated further by the middle leadership development training undertaken by the highly-skilled co-ordinators, all of whom carry out their respective responsibilities in an effective, collaborative manner.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The school improvement process is clearly linked to a well-constructed school development plan underpinned by careful self-evaluation. There are good processes for consultation about the school development plan within the school community. Clear policies and rigorous analysis of data inform the action plans, which outline good strategies to raise the children's standards and achievements.

The school meets the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.

4.3 ACCOMMODATION

The staff team works conscientiously to create an inviting, child-centred environment in the classrooms and circulation areas, providing attractive displays to showcase many aspects of the children's learning and creativity. The standard of caretaking is excellent.

4.4 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The governors are well-informed about the work of the school. They are very supportive of the Principal and the staff in the implementation of the school development plan and the overall strategic planning and policy development for the school. The school has made good use of resources allocated for the provision of activities through the Extended Schools funding initiative.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the very well-behaved and responsive children, who demonstrate enthusiasm and interest in all aspects of their learning and school life;
- the outstanding quality of the pastoral care for the children and the staff, evidenced by, for example, the very good working relationships and the wide range of extended learning experiences provided for the children;
- the very good standards achieved by the children in English and mathematics, including the targets met in individual education plans;
- the quality of the teaching observed during the inspection, most of which was good to outstanding, with the majority being good or very good;
- the excellent quality of the work of the co-ordinators and their collaborative approach to raising the standards achieved by all of the children, through the rigorous analysis of data; and
- the effective strategic leadership of the Principal in facilitating the continuous improvement of all aspects of school life.

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

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