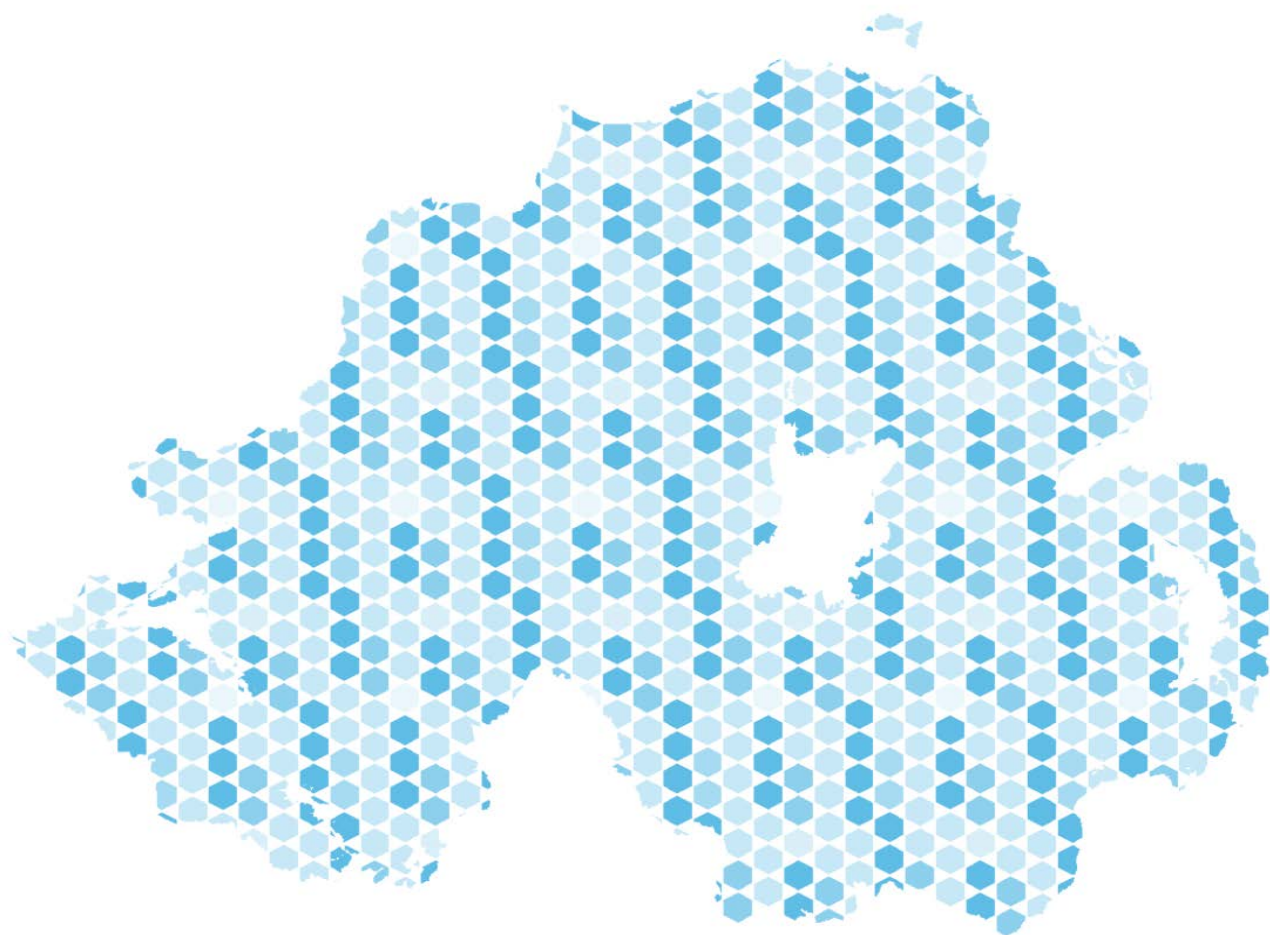


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Colum's Primary School,  
Portstewart, County  
Londonderry

Report of an Inspection in  
December 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 used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

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 when reporting on Achievement and standards, on Provision for learning and on Leadership and management:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

## Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the school:

The school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The school needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

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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 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 learning and teaching, 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.

Eighteen percent of parents responded to the questionnaires. Their responses indicated satisfaction with aspects of the provision. In particular, all of the parents acknowledged their children's enjoyment of learning and nearly all affirmed how well the staff cared for the well-being of the children and the good progress that they make in their schoolwork. A minority of the parents raised concerns about aspects of management, such as, the communication with parents. Almost all of the teachers completed the questionnaires and affirmed well the work of the school, while most of the support staff responded positively. The ETI has reported to the principal and a representative of the board of governors the matters arising from the questionnaires.

## **2. Focus of inspection**

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all children, the purpose of inspection is, through effective linking of internal and external approaches , to evaluate the:

- children's achievements and standards with a particular focus on literacy including how the school is addressing low attainment and underachievement where applicable;
- quality of provision for learning with a particular focus on literacy; and
- quality of leadership and management.

## **3. Context**

St Colum's Primary School is a maintained primary school situated in Lever Road, Portstewart. Most of the children attending the school come from the surrounding area. The school has seen its enrolment decline over the last four years. The percentage of the children entitled to free school meals has risen steadily over the same period, while the percentage of children requiring support with aspects of their learning has increased. The school lives out its motto, "From little acorns to mighty oaks," as evidenced by the good levels of progress in learning the children make by the end of key stage (KS) 2.

St Colum's Primary School	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Enrolment	190	169	173	167
% School attendance	97.5	97.3	97	97.4
% NI Primary school average	94.9	95.6	N/A	N/A
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	7	10	13	16
No. of children on SEN register				
% of children on SEN register	10	12	13	16
No. of children with statements of educational need	2	4	4	4
No. of newcomer children	5	6	5	6

**Source:** data as held by the school.

\* fewer than 5

N/A not available

#### 4. Overall findings of the inspection

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Address an important area for improvement
<b>Achievements and standards</b>	Good
<b>Provision for learning</b>	Good
<b>Leadership and management</b>	Important area for improvement

#### 5. Achievements and standards

- The children are courteous, confident and develop well positive attitudes to their learning. They are happy in their learning and play and their behaviour is excellent. The children demonstrate very good self-management skills and articulate well their ideas and opinions.
- The school's performance data shows that most children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make progress in English and mathematics which is in line with their ability or above expectation. The children take pride in their achievements and present their work to a good standard.
- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning make good progress in meeting the targets outlined in their individual education plans. These children work confidently alongside their peers and contribute well to all aspects of school life.
- In foundation stage, the children settle quickly to learning and develop very well their communication skills. Across the school, the children express themselves confidently and clearly in appropriate learning contexts. The children's writing skills improve year-on-year and they benefit from writing in a variety of forms. By year 7, the children read with good fluency and understanding and can talk keenly about their reading. A key strength is their ability to de-construct and identify the parts of complex words in order to make sense of what they are reading.

<sup>1</sup> The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of children entitled to free school meals.

## **6. Provision for learning**

- While the whole-school approach to planning provides adequate guidance for learning, aspects of the planning lack sufficient detail that would tailor the learning and teaching more closely to the varied needs, interests and abilities of the children. A more pro-active co-ordination and oversight of the key areas of learning would improve further the quality of the provision.
- The quality of nearly all of the learning and teaching observed is good or better. In the most effective lessons, the teachers use a range of well-chosen activities and resources to promote the children's enjoyment of and engagement in learning. The key strengths include effective teacher questioning, good pace and challenge, and good levels of enjoyment in learning. Where less effective learning and teaching was observed, there was insufficient challenge for higher ability children.
- The programme for the development of the children's reading and writing has undergone recent review to ensure that all aspects of literacy are taught in a more coherent way using more appealing resources. The key strengths of the provision include: the development and enjoyment of reading across the school; the revised foundation stage reading programme; and, the introduction of diagnostic testing to identify learning needs more quickly and to inform better the subsequent intervention strategies.
- The provision for special educational needs is inclusive and well-informed through a range of performance data, specialist diagnostic assessments and the teachers' professional judgements. Early identification of need by the teachers is a priority, and ongoing focus is maintained on potential emerging barriers to learning as children progress throughout the school. The children are supported well through in-class, withdrawal and external agency support, and classroom assistants contribute well to children's individual learning programmes.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is very good. There is a very caring and inclusive ethos, with all staff being aware of and sensitive to the pastoral needs of the children. An important strength is the children's awareness of internet safety, and, they benefit from their involvement in the school- and Eco-councils which develops well their leadership and inter-personal skills.
- The school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity thereby encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The leadership and management of the school is highly committed to the well-being of the children and staff and to improving the provision for learning. The school development plan sets out a number of appropriate priorities for development that are well informed by consultation and the effective analysis of qualitative and quantitative data.

- Recent staff movement within the middle-management structure has resulted in key areas of learning being left without permanent leadership and co-ordination and, consequently, middle management posts have been temporarily re-allocated. This has been identified as an issue by the principal and the governing body; they are reviewing the management and co-ordinator roles at middle management level as an appropriate priority. The planned focus on the development of collegial leadership and teamwork across the school is appropriate and there is a need to develop further the capacity of the staff to fulfil co-ordinator roles.
- Based on the evidence available 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 governors have been very proactive in reflective analysis of their roles and in accessing relevant training on effective governance. They provide high quality support and challenge to the school management and engage appropriately with school staff, children and parents.
- 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 in year 6 reported that they are happy and secure in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their well-being.

## **8. Overall effectiveness**

The school needs to address an important area for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The area for improvement is:

- the development of a middle-management structure to support senior leadership in both strategic and operational school foci, embedding evaluative leadership of key curricular areas.

The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the area for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection in 12 to 18 months.

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