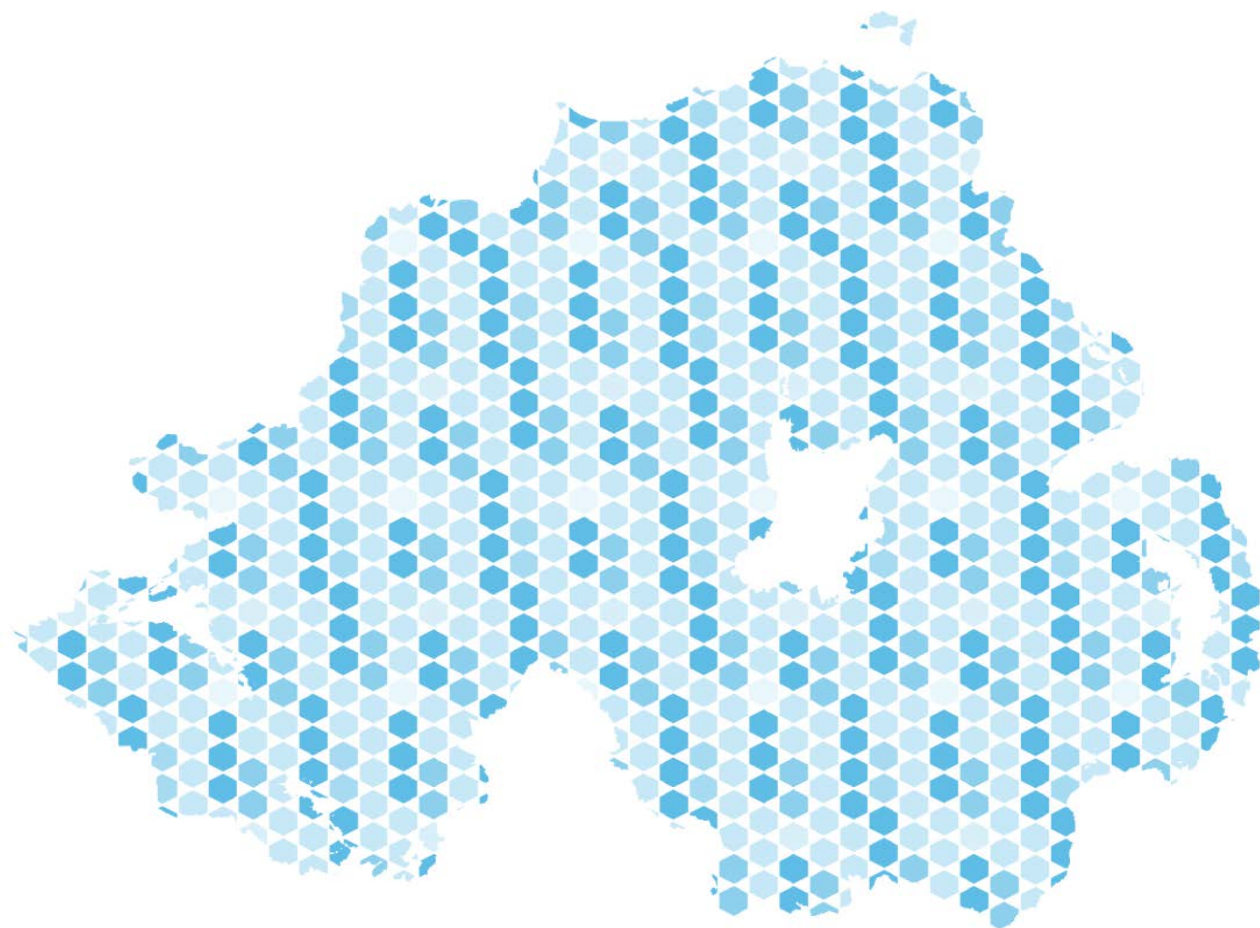


# PRIMARY INSPECTION 2015-16



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Francis Primary School,  
Lurgan, County Armagh

Report of an Inspection in  
November 2015

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

Six percent of the parents and 45% of the staff responded to the questionnaires. Most of the responses to the parental questionnaires indicated very high levels of satisfaction with educational and pastoral provision provided by the school. In particular, the parents praised the approachable and committed staff, the inclusive and caring ethos and the importance of the school in the local community. A majority of the teaching staff completed questionnaires and their responses were positive. The ETI has reported to the principal and representatives of the board of governors the main issues emerging 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 in literacy and numeracy; including how the school is addressing low attainment and underachievement where applicable;
- quality of provision for learning in the school including the nursery unit and the Irish-medium unit; and
- quality of leadership and management.

## **3. Context**

St Francis Primary School, Lurgan, is a maintained primary school with a nursery unit and an Irish-medium unit. Approximately 20% of the children require additional help with aspects of their learning. Over the past four years, the school enrolment has remained fairly constant; the number of children in the Irish-medium unit and the number of newcomer children have increased significantly; and the percentage of children entitled to free school meals has decreased slightly.

St Francis Primary School	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Enrolment	830	843	824	826
% School attendance	94	93	93	N/A
% NI Primary school average	94.9	95.6	N/A	N/A
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	37	37	33	34
No. of children on SEN register	138	147	153	152
% of children on SEN register	17	18	19	18
No. of children with statements of educational need	14	20	17	16
No. of newcomer children	46	61	56	69

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

\* fewer than 5

N/A not available

#### 4. Overall findings of the inspection

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
<b>Achievements and standards</b>	Very good
<b>Provision for learning</b>	Very good
<b>Leadership and management</b>	Very good
<b>Irish-Medium Unit</b>	Very good
<b>Nursery Unit</b>	Good

#### 5. Achievements and standards

- The children throughout the school including the Irish-medium unit and the nursery unit are respectful of their teachers and each other and demonstrate high levels of interest, motivation, engagement and enjoyment in their learning. Almost all of the children listen well in class, settle quickly to their lessons and are keen to learn. They work well in pairs and small groups, where they self-manage and can take on different roles to build their confidence and self-esteem.
- 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 in line with their ability or above expectation.
- Throughout the school, the children develop well their literacy skills in talking and listening, reading and writing. The most able children in year 7, including children from the Irish-medium unit, are enthusiastic, expressive and fluent readers who confidently discuss the material they are reading and their favourite authors. As they progress through the year groups, the standard of the children's written work shows very good progression; they plan, draft and edit their work and write in a variety of forms for a range of purposes and audiences. The presentation of their work is of a consistently high quality across the key stages.

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

- By year 7, the children demonstrate a good understanding of mathematical concepts whilst solving mathematical problems and are able to justify their answers and draw on a good range of mathematical strategies and vocabulary. However, they need to improve further the flexibility in their thinking when recalling the processes they use during mathematical activities.
- Overall, the majority of the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning make progress throughout key stage (KS) 2 and are able to work well in class for increasingly sustained periods of time. In English, almost all of these children achieve at or above expectation, and, in mathematics, a majority achieve at or above expectation.
- The children's standards in English, Irish and mathematics in the Irish-medium unit are very good. Almost all of them demonstrate high levels of understanding and fluency in Irish. From the foundation stage, the children use Irish with increasing fluency in conversation with their peers, teachers and visitors. They write across a range of forms for meaningful purposes and present their work to a high standard. By the end of KS2, the children read with fluency and expression in Irish and English and demonstrate flexibility in their thinking across both languages. The children demonstrate a very good knowledge and understanding of key mathematical concepts across all areas of the mathematics curriculum. They can apply their mental mathematics strategies in real-life situations and explain their thinking using appropriate mathematical language in Irish.
- The children in the nursery unit enjoy their learning and are making very good progress in co-operating with the daily routines, developing their social skills and in using the play equipment with increasing independence. A majority of the children are developing well their attention and listening skills; they communicate well and enjoy stories and have an interest in print and mark making. A significant minority of the children have been identified as requiring support to develop further their language and communication skills. A majority of the children are beginning to understand simple mathematical concepts and language such as number, colour, shape and pattern. The children in the nursery unit, who are identified with additional needs, are making good progress in the areas identified as requiring support.
- The school has made a considerable investment in information and communication technology (ICT) resources and tablet computers to progress the children's digital skills. The children use ICT with increasing confidence to engage actively with their learning by managing information and presenting it in a range of appropriate digital formats. In a majority of lessons observed, the children make effective use of tablet computers to support and consolidate their learning in literacy and numeracy and to develop their creativity.

## **6. Provision for learning**

- Planning, assessment, learning and teaching in most of the lessons observed was good or better; just over one-half were very good, and a few were outstanding.

- In the most effective practice, the teachers' expectations are appropriately high and the level of challenge and differentiation is matched well to the needs of all of the children. The teachers' planning is well informed by the evaluation of the children's previous learning and knowledge and there is appropriate breadth and progression in the literacy and numeracy skills. The lessons incorporate a range of well-chosen tasks and targeted intervention and assessment for learning strategies to motivate and actively engage the children. Effective questioning is used well by teachers to develop the children's higher order thinking skills and to encourage them to make confident, extended oral responses. The teachers and the children are well supported by the classroom assistants who encourage the children to work independently. In the less effective practice, in a minority of lessons, there was over-direction by the teacher, and a lack of pace and challenge to stimulate and engage all of the children in sustained learning.
- The children who require additional support with their learning are identified during the foundation stage through extensive assessment using a range of standardised tests and teacher observation. Most of the teachers include clear, learning targets in the education plans; they are based on assessment information, implemented well in the classroom, and in a range of additional support lessons by highly skilled support staff. Additional helpful support strategies for the children's literacy skills include skilful withdrawal sessions, beginning from year 2. In mathematics, there is effective regular individual support in year 5 to address individual children's underachievement in numeracy. The special needs team track carefully the effectiveness of the interventions, and the resulting information is used well to inform further planning for support and learning strategies for each child.
- The planning for literacy guides well the development of reading, writing and talking and listening. The ongoing improvement in the children's literacy skills is underpinned by rigorous monitoring and evaluation of progress and the establishment and review of specific literacy targets. The school's reading programme is systematic and is used very effectively to extend the children's skills, experiences and enjoyment of reading. The progress of the children in reading is further supported by a wide variety of appropriate interventions including 'Reading Partnership', 'Time To Read' with community volunteers, older children reading with younger children and the use of computer-based reading resources. The language and literacy lines of development are under review currently, with consideration being given to the balance between content and skills development to ensure progression is adequate and to exploiting more fully the opportunities for the development of the children's literacy skills through other areas of the curriculum.
- There is a comprehensive and integrated programme for the development of the children's bi-literacy skills throughout the Irish –medium unit. The teachers and classroom assistants use effective immersion strategies to develop further the children's linguistic competency, in both Irish and English, and provide them with very good opportunities to use their language skills in meaningful contexts across the curriculum.

- The numeracy schemes guide well the teachers' planning and draw upon appropriate strategies for learning and teaching mathematics. As they progress through the school, the children engage well in their learning; exploring and investigating mathematical concepts during, for instance, their work on number. They have opportunities to extend further their mathematical experience and vocabulary while working independently, in pairs and in group work activities. The staff have identified appropriately the need to include more strategies for differentiation and ensure consistency in the quality of the children's learning experiences within and across year groups. The evaluation of the children's progress needs to be individualised and used to inform the teachers' planning for future learning, to ensure the children are making adequate progression.
- The whole school use of mental mathematics activities develops well the flexibility in the children's mathematics thinking. The teachers have identified appropriately that problem solving is an area for development, consequently, there are frequent opportunities for the children to apply their learning in the regular problems and challenges set for them. There are systems in place to review the numeracy provision; and the school has identified the need to monitor and evaluate more robustly the quality of, and progression in, the children's mathematics experiences to effect further improvement.
- The attractive learning environment in the nursery unit both indoors and outdoors is well resourced. In the most effective practice, in a majority of the sessions observed, the staff listen carefully to the children's own ideas and respond in an age appropriate way to build on and extend their learning and language. In the less effective practice, the adult interactions during play or lengthy group sessions limit the development of the children's oral responses, problem solving, imaginative and creative ideas. The very detailed and extensively planned nursery programme provides good to very good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The children identified with additional needs are identified early, well integrated and have suitable individual education plans to guide the staff support. To improve further the children's experiences the staff need to review the planning, observation and practice to ensure that it aligns more fully to the Pre-school Curricular Guidance.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school, Irish-medium unit and nursery unit is very good and is an integral part of the learning and teaching experiences of the children. The mutually respectful working relationships between the children and their teachers enhance the children's confidence and self-esteem which creates a positive learning environment. The school gives very good attention to the promotion of mental health and well-being, through a range of interventions, including a well used counselling service and additional pastoral support that help the children overcome potential barriers to their learning.
- The school has developed a large woodland area within the school grounds. The area is resourced well with appropriate equipment and accommodation to provide the children with relevant and authentic outdoor learning experiences to support, for example, the thematic development of the World around Us across the curriculum.



- The school gives a high priority to promoting a healthy lifestyle through the curriculum and through the varied range of extra-curricular activities available to the children.
- The school has effective arrangements in place for communicating with parents; the active 'Friends of Saint Francis' group have raised significant additional finance for specific projects.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The leadership and management of the school are very effective. There is a clear strategic direction for future developments in the school which takes account of the needs of the children, parents, staff and the wider community.
- The school's agreed improvement agenda, which is linked to a well constructed school development plan, is underpinned and informed by appropriate action planning in the key curricular areas of learning. The staff's analysis of a wide range of qualitative and quantitative performance data and indicators at child, class and whole school level: ensures that the children's progress against the targets of the previous action plans are charted and assessed accurately regarding the impact of their past work; and demonstrates a high level of capacity to sustain improvement.
- In taking the school improvement work forward, the staff have identified and are addressing appropriately the need for all of them to review the effectiveness of their work through its continuous monitoring review cycle.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are very well informed about the school's place within the local and wider community and they make effective use of the school's qualitative and quantitative data to monitor the children's progress.
- 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. The inspectors met with groups of children from the year 6 classes including the mainstream and Irish-medium unit. In discussions, the children spoke highly of the support they receive from their teachers and the various cultural, musical, sporting and social aspects of school life which they enjoy. They reported that they feel safe and cared for in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.

## **8. Overall effectiveness**

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.

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