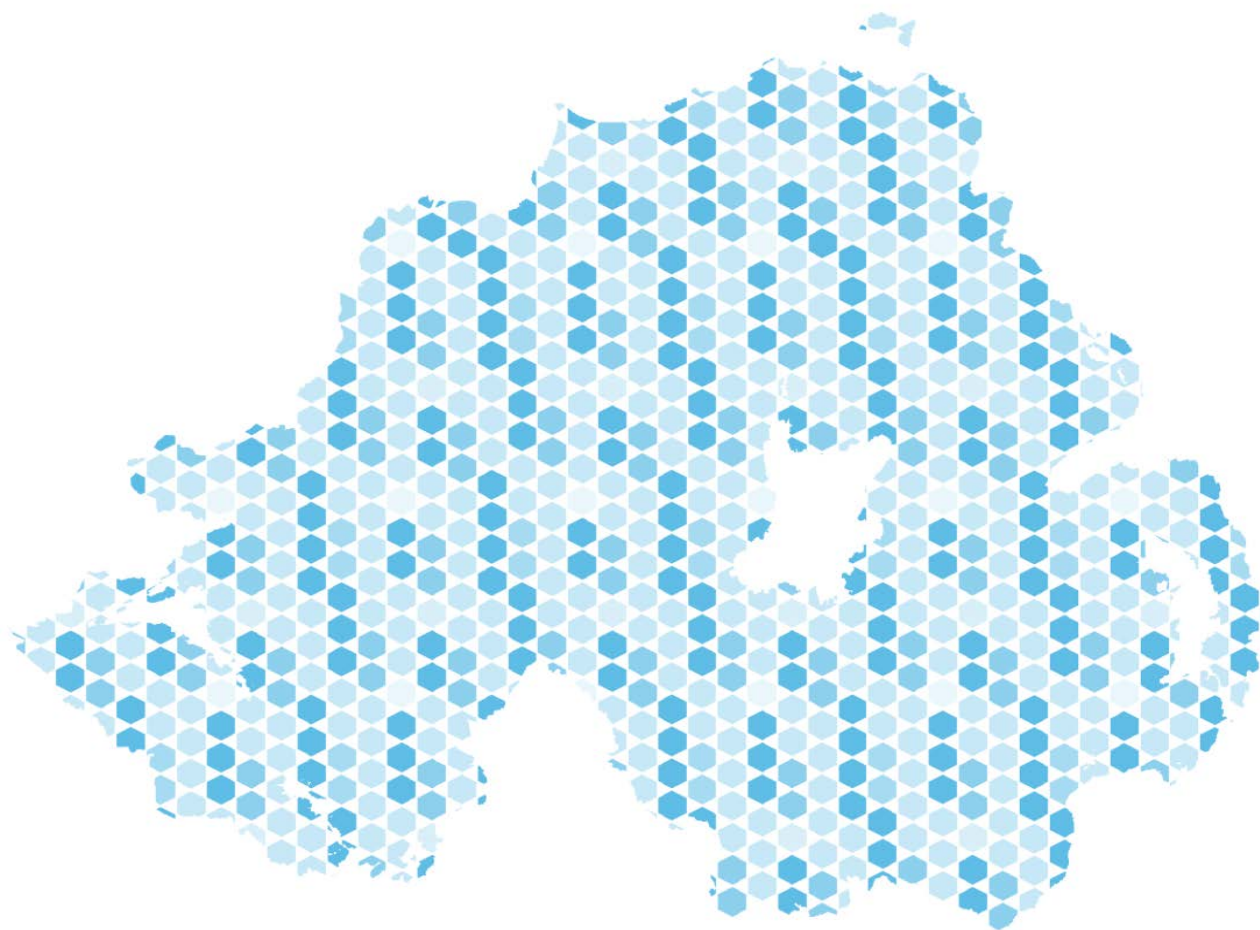


PRIMARY INSPECTION 2015-16



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Malachy's Primary School,
Newry, County Down

Report of an Inspection in
November 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.

Nine percent of parents and all of the staff responded to the questionnaires. Almost all the responses to the parental and staff questionnaires indicated high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents praised the nurturing, supportive staff; the excellent leadership of the principal and the very good range of learning experiences provided for the children. The staff responses were very positive and highlighted the outstanding pastoral ethos of the school and the culture of continuous self-evaluation which is effectively led by the senior leadership team. The ETI has reported to the principal and a representative of the board of governors the outcomes 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; and
- quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

St Malachy's Primary School is a maintained primary school situated in the Carnagat area of Newry City. Almost all of the children attending the school come from Carnagat and the surrounding area. The percentage of children entitled to free school meals has increased over the last three years to 60%, while the number of children who require additional support with aspects of their learning has remained steady. The number of newcomer children attending the school has risen significantly in the last four years. The principal and vice-principal have been appointed since the last inspection in 2009.

| St Malachy's Primary School | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Enrolment (years 1 – 7) | 270 | 268 | 273 | 279 |
| % School attendance | 91.1 | 91.7 | 92.47 | N/A |
| % NI Primary school average | 94.9 | 95.6 | N/A | N/A |
| FSME Percentage ¹ | 58 | 47 | 59 | 60 |
| No. of children on SEN register | 62 | 59 | 57 | 70 |
| % of children on SEN register | 23 | 22 | 21 | 25 |
| No. of children with statements of educational need | 17 | 16 | 13 | 15 |
| No. of newcomer children | 24 | 33 | 52 | 59 |

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

N/A not available

4. Overall findings of the inspection

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Overall effectiveness | High level of capacity for sustained improvement |
| Achievements and standards | Very good |
| Provision for learning | Very good |
| Leadership and management | Very good |

5. Achievements and standards

- Throughout the school, the children's behaviour is exemplary; they are highly motivated to learn, respectful of their teachers, listen well in class and settle quickly to their learning tasks. From an early stage, they have high levels of self-management and creativity and take pride in their learning. By key stage (KS) 2, they take on roles and responsibilities with great maturity and develop effective leadership skills. The children take part in and experience success in a range of local cultural and sporting competitions.
- The school's performance data shows that most of the 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.
- By KS2, the children have gained a good knowledge and understanding of key mathematical concepts and can apply them successfully in investigations and when solving problems. During the inspection, the more able year 7 children had a very good understanding of place value, estimation, three-dimensional solids and probability and had an accurate recall of multiplication facts.
- Across the three key stages, the children can communicate clearly with their peers and adults in group work and class discussions. The children develop a very good range of reading strategies and, by the end of KS2, they read with fluency, understanding and expression. They write to a good standard across a range of forms.

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

- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning respond very well to the range of interventions in place to support their learning. They are highly motivated and enthusiastic about their learning and are included fully in all aspects of the life and work of the school.
- The children use confidently information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance their learning across the curriculum. In particular, they make very good use of a range of programmes to improve their reading.

6. Provision for learning

- In the most effective practice, in almost half of the lessons observed, the learning was stimulating and well structured. The teachers used the planning and assessment processes well to ensure there was a clear focus on the learning and provided appropriate support to ensure effectively the progress of all the children. Meaningful plenary sessions were used well by the teachers to consolidate the children's learning and the teachers' evaluations guide effectively future planning. In the less effective practice, in almost one-fifth of the lessons observed, the planning did not provide sufficient guidance for the teachers to meet the needs of all of the children. In these lessons, the learning was not clearly differentiated and over-direction by the teacher restricted the opportunities for the children to take responsibility for their learning.
- The teachers mark regularly the children's work and most provide advice on how the children can improve the quality of their work either orally or in written form. The staff need to develop a more consistent approach to marking for improvement to enable the children to improve their work and to be more involved in their learning.
- The provision for the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning is outstanding. The children are identified at an early stage using a range of diagnostic tests and teacher observations. The staff use a range of appropriate intervention strategies, including a sensory motor programme, to support the children's learning and development. The children receive support in class and in the well-planned, highly effective withdrawal sessions. The classroom assistants make a very good contribution to the children's learning. A key strength of the provision is the thorough and rigorous tracking undertaken by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) of the intervention strategies and their impact on the children's learning. The school liaises regularly with parents to ensure they are well informed and can support their children at home through, for example, the daily home-school journal. There are very good links between the school and external agencies to support further the children's learning and development.
- A key feature of the literacy provision is the appropriate focus on the development of the children's language and reading skills. The school's reading programme is systematic; the teachers use effectively the well-planned guided reading sessions to develop the children's fluency, understanding and enjoyment of reading. In the best practice, children have very good opportunities to develop their talking and listening skills through meaningful class discussion and appropriate group and paired work. The programme for writing provides good opportunities for the children to write in a variety of styles. The staff need to improve further the teaching of writing to ensure the children have more opportunities to extend their writing and to write in meaningful contexts across the curriculum. The children use ICT effectively to present their ideas in digital form.

- The planning for numeracy is detailed and provides effective guidance for the teachers to ensure that the children's development of mathematical processes is integrated fully into a broad and balanced approach to their learning of key concepts and skills. The children's success in mathematical processes is celebrated appropriately at school assemblies. The teachers have been provided with useful guidance on mental mathematics strategies. In the best practice, in most of the numeracy lessons observed, teachers promoted and explained carefully these strategies and the children developed and consolidated them by explaining their thinking to their peers. It will be important to build on this good practice and disseminate it further across the school.
- The quality of the provision for pastoral care is outstanding. The school vision, "To enhance each talent and meet each need," permeates the life and work of the school. The needs of the children are accorded paramount importance in the school and the holistic approach by the staff to the children's development meets their personal, social and emotional needs very effectively. A key strength of the pastoral provision is the strong sense of community that exists in the school underpinned by a supportive, inclusive ethos. In addition, the diverse activities provided beyond the classroom enrich the learning experiences for the children.
- The children enjoy the safe, calm and welcoming environment within the recently established nurture room and they make very good progress in their learning. The staff know the children well and use highly effective support strategies to develop the children's learning and their social and emotional skills. The staff liaise very effectively with the parents to ensure they are well informed about the teaching strategies to enable them to support their children's learning at home.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity thereby encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The senior leadership team is highly effective; there is a shared vision for school improvement and clear strategic direction for future developments in the school. The senior leaders lead by example, instil confidence in the staff and empower them to lead their respective areas of responsibility. They are highly committed to the well-being of the children and the staff and to the involvement of families in the life and work of the school. There is an effective culture of self- evaluation in the school; all of the staff work very well as a team and have a clear focus on improving further the provision for the children and the standards they attain.
- The school improvement process is linked clearly to a well-constructed school development plan (SDP) that has involved extensive consultation with the wider school community. The associated action plans guide effectively the development work across the school and there are robust processes in place to monitor and evaluate the impact of the improvement work.
- The school has very effective links with the parents and local community. The parents are informed about the life and work of the school through regular newsletters, reports and a range of parent information workshops. A particular strength of the school is the outreach to parents through planned programmes, for example, Families and School Together (FAST), which help the parents to become more involved in their children's learning and development.

- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors have a well-developed strategic overview of the school and are very well informed about the life and work of the school. They have an excellent range of complementary skills, monitor well the outworking of the SDP and provide appropriate support and challenge to the senior leadership team.
- 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 years 6 and 7 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 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.

Health and Safety

1. The security arrangements for the playground area require urgent review and risk assessment by the board of governors, principal and employing authority.

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