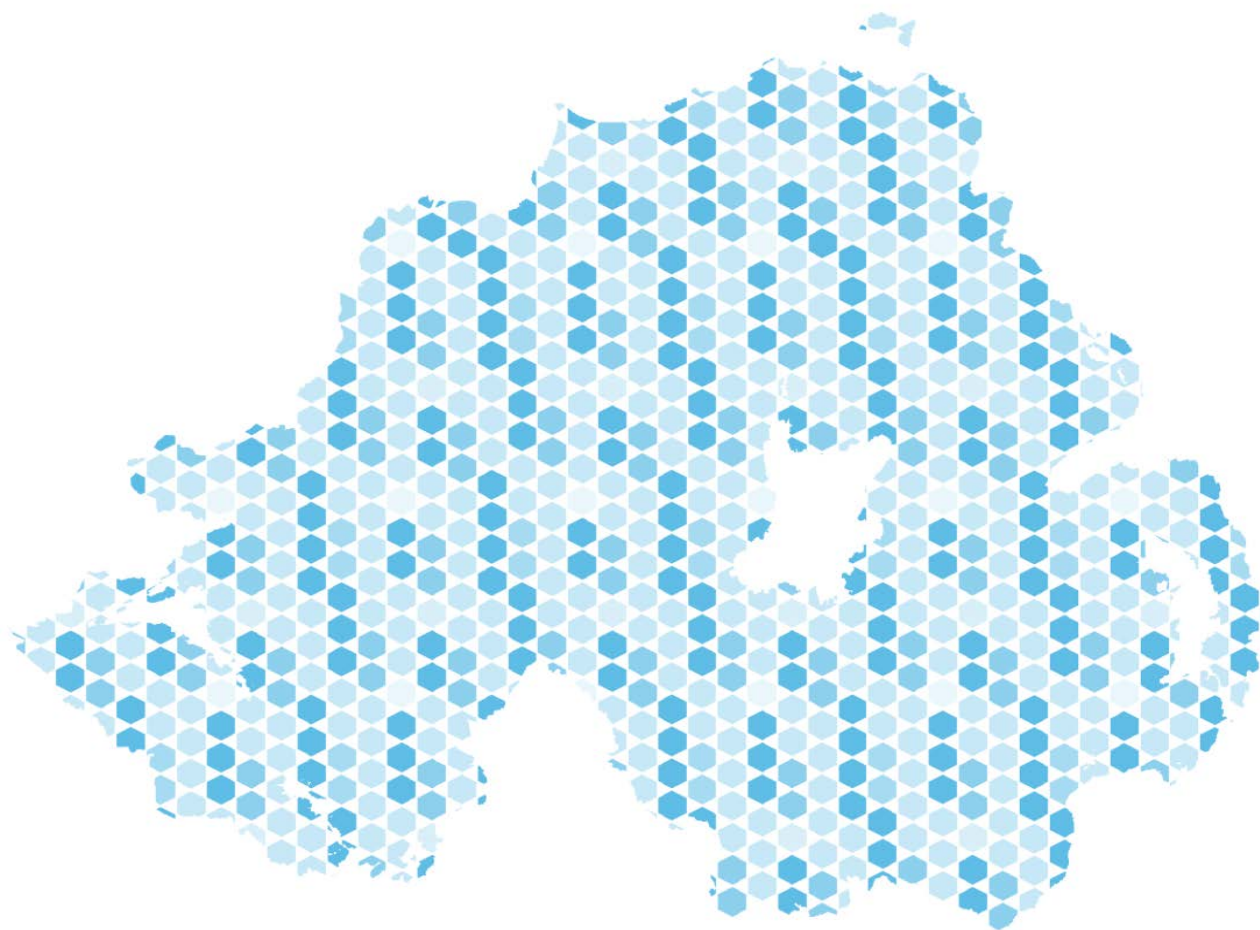


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Mary's Primary School and  
Nursery Unit, Mullaghbawn,  
County Armagh

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.

## Contents

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. Inspection method and evidence base	1
2. Focus of inspection	1
3. Context	1
4. Overall findings of the inspection	2
5. Achievements and standards	2
6. Provision for learning	3
7. Leadership and management	5
8. Overall effectiveness	5
Appendix	

## **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.

Six percent of parents and ninety- four percent of 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 dedication and hard work of the staff, the activities and visits outside the school and the place of the school in the heart of the local community. The staff responses were very positive and highlighted the opportunities for professional development, the quality of the working relationships throughout the school and the opportunities for the children to contribute to aspects of decision making. The ETI has reported to the acting principal and a representative of the board of governors the main issues emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

## **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
- quality of leadership and management.

## **3. Context**

St Mary's Primary School and Nursery Unit is a maintained primary school situated in the village of Mullaghbawn, approximately 10 miles from Newry. Almost all of the children attending the school come from the village and the local surrounding area. The school has a nursery unit which has operated at full capacity for the past four years. The percentage of children entitled to free school meals has decreased slightly over the past four years as has the proportion of children requiring additional help with aspects of their learning. A recent programme of refurbishment has provided new car parking facilities, a suite of new mobile classrooms, a new playground and new perimeter fencing.

St Mary's Primary School	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Enrolment (years 1 – 7)	281	296	288	289
Nursery Unit enrolment	26	26	26	26
% School attendance	94.9	95.2	95.7	N/A
% NI Primary school average	94.9	95.6	N/A	N/A
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	30.7	28.9	28.0	27.3
No. of children on SEN register	45	41	37	37
% of children on SEN register	16.0	14.0	13.0	13.0
No. of children with statements of educational need	10	9	8	8
No. of newcomer children	0	0	0	1

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

\* fewer than 5

N/A not available

#### 4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Achievements and standards	Very good
Provision for learning	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Nursery Unit	Very good

#### 5. Achievements and standards

- Throughout the school and nursery unit, the children are well-behaved and are highly motivated to learn. They are respectful of their teachers, listen well in class and settle quickly to their learning tasks. When provided with stimulating and appropriately differentiated learning activities, in more than one- third of the lessons observed, the children become more engaged in their learning and demonstrate independence and flexibility in their learning and thinking.
- The school's performance data shows that almost all 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.
- The children achieve very good standards in numeracy. The most able children, by year 7, are flexible in their thinking and use a wide range of mental strategies. Throughout the school, the children talk confidently about their learning and are able to explain their mathematical strategies and use the appropriate mathematical language.

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

- The children achieve very good standards in literacy. Across the three key stages, the children can communicate clearly with their peers and adults in, for example, class and group discussions and play -based learning activities. By year 7, the children can read with fluency and expression to enhance meaning and write in a variety of forms and in a range of contexts with increasing independence.
- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are making very good progress with their learning. They respond very well to the range of interventions in place to support their learning and are included fully in all aspects of the life and work of the school.
- The children in the nursery unit are very well settled for the time of year and are making very good progress in all aspects of their learning and development. They spend sustained periods concentrating on tasks with confidence and have developed high levels of independence. The children participate fully in well managed song, rhyme and story sessions. They show imagination and creativity in their use of materials and play equipment in the playroom and, in particular, the outdoor area. They communicate effectively with each other and can talk to the staff about their work and learning experiences.
- The children use confidently information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance their learning across the curriculum. A particular strength is the creative way in which they use this technology to collaborate with their partner schools to support and develop their global links.

## **6. Provision for learning**

- In the most effective practice, in one- third 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 scaffold effectively the progress of all the children. They used meaningful plenary sessions to consolidate the children's learning and made good use of their evaluations to guide effectively future planning. In the less effective practice, in a minority of the lessons observed, the planning did not guide sufficiently 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 teachers restricted the opportunities for the children to develop their language and self-management skills, to work collaboratively in pairs and small groups and to take responsibility for their learning. In order to improve further the good quality of learning, all teachers need to plan for and ensure appropriate levels of differentiation and provide further opportunities to challenge the more able children.
- The teachers mark regularly the children's work with positive comments and, in a small number of examples provide clear advice on how the children can improve the quality of their work. The staff need to develop a more consistent approach to marking for improvement and assessment for learning to enable the children to be more involved in their learning.

- There is effective use of a range of assessment data to inform target setting and track the progress of children requiring additional support with aspects of their learning. The nature of the need is identified early and an extensive range of effective intervention strategies, including multi-sensory and speech and language interventions, are available to increase children's self esteem and attainments. The skilful classroom assistants support the children well with their learning. The staff work effectively with a range of outside agencies to meet the needs of the children.
- The planning for progression in literacy allows the children to develop talking and listening skills through purposeful tasks and activities building on the children's interests and abilities. There is a strong oral tradition and culture that is used to prepare for meaningful writing experiences in fiction and non-fiction forms and the school's systematic approach to the teaching of spelling is used well to ensure accuracy in writing. The introduction of programmes to promote the enjoyment of reading and to develop independent reading skills, particularly for boys, is very successful. The children use effectively ICT to present their ideas in digital form.
- A key feature of the numeracy provision is the appropriate focus on the development of the children's ability in mental mathematics. Interventions to improve this area of numeracy development have been effective in raising the children's standards. Across the school, the teachers are focusing appropriately on the development of the children's number work, providing good opportunities for the children to consolidate prior learning. In the best practice, in a small number of the numeracy lessons observed, the teachers employ active learning strategies, use effective questioning to develop and extend the children's mathematical thinking and are providing opportunities for the children to work independently and with others. The staff need to ensure a more consistent approach to addressing the thinking skills and personal capabilities of the children. In particular, the children would benefit from regular opportunities to develop their problem-solving skills and opportunities to apply their learning to investigative tasks across all areas of the curriculum.
- The positive, stimulating learning environment in the nursery unit develops effectively the children's decision making and self- management skills. The outdoor area provides very good opportunities for learning across the pre-school curriculum; in particular, the children's curiosity about the natural world and their physical development through energetic play. The staff listen attentively to the children, take account of their ideas and promote skilfully the children's language development. The staff plan an interesting and varied programme that provides appropriate challenge and progression for the children throughout the year. They use an appropriate range of methods to gather information about the children's progress and development; this information is used well to inform the future planning to meet the children's individual needs.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school and nursery unit is very good. There is a caring, welcoming and inclusive ethos evident throughout the school and very good working relationships at all levels. The children are proud of their school and they show care and respect for one another and for the staff. The children have very good opportunities to contribute to decision-making in the school, for example, through the school council and Eco-council.

- The staff give 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 committed to the well-being of the children and staff and to the ongoing improvement of the provision within the school. The co-ordinators have identified low and underachievement and have put strategies in place to improve further the children's achievements and standards. There remains a need for senior leadership, co-ordinators and teachers to monitor and evaluate more rigorously the quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements in order to raise further the standards attained by all the children.
- There is a comprehensive school development plan which identifies key priorities for school improvement. The associated action plans need to be more focused on outcomes and on the learning experiences of all the children, in order to guide better the process of monitoring and evaluation. The school development planning process would benefit from more structured consultation with parents and children.
- The school and nursery unit have very effective links with the parents and local community. The parents are informed about the life and work of the school through regular newsletters and the school website. The parents support the school well by helping their children at home and through volunteering and fundraising activities. The children take part in a range of local cultural and sporting competitions. The school has very well developed international links which enhance the children's learning and, in particular, their use of ICT.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. There are aspects of governance to review, namely, to ensure that the processes of monitoring and evaluation are more focussed on the learning experiences of all the children.
- 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 demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor the how the school sustains improvement.

There is an area for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address. The area is:

- the senior leadership, co-ordinators and teachers need to monitor and evaluate more rigorously the quality of the children's learning experiences and achievements in order to raise further the standards attained by all the children.



**Health and Safety**

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

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