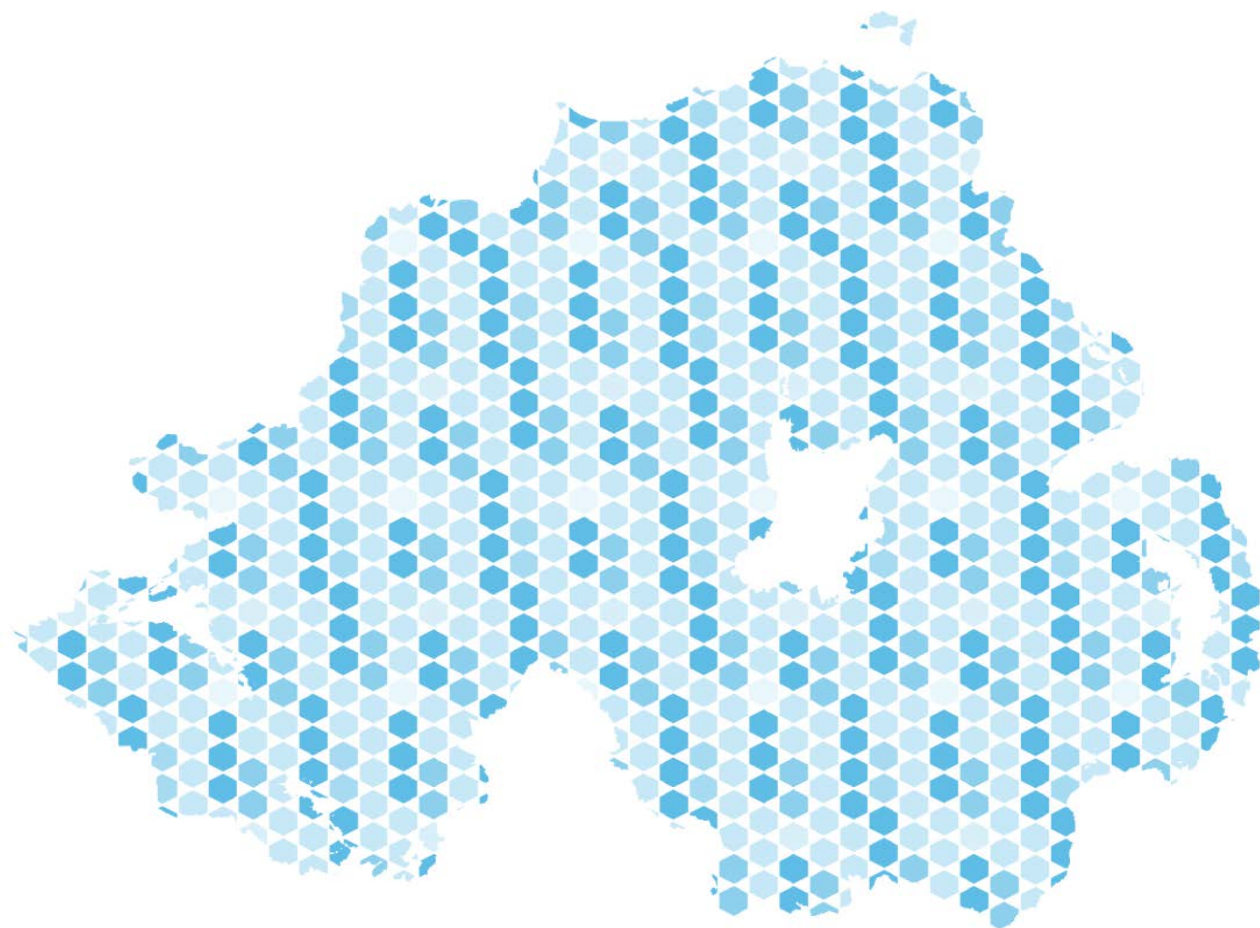


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Oliver Plunkett Primary
School, Strathfoyle,
County Derry

Report of an Inspection in
February 2016

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.

A small number of parents and 73% of staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. The responses to the parental questionnaire indicated high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted: the caring staff; the regular communication which keeps them well-informed about school life; and, the availability of the breakfast club. A majority of the staff completed the questionnaire and they commented positively on the school's inclusive, welcoming ethos. The ETI has reported to the principal and a representative of the board of governors the main issues emerging from the questionnaire 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; and
- quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

St Oliver Plunkett Primary School is a maintained primary school situated in Strathfoyle, Derry. All of the children attending the school come from the Strathfoyle and Maydown areas. Over the past four years, the enrolment and the percentage of children entitled to free school meals have increased significantly. The percentage of children requiring additional help with aspects of their learning and the number of newcomer children has remained steady over the past three years. At the time of the inspection, there were three temporary teachers employed in the school.

St Oliver Plunkett Primary School	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Enrolment	172	202	200	208
% School attendance	93.2	94.3	95.5	N/A
% NI Primary school average	94.9	95.6	95.4	N/A
FSME Percentage ¹	51	50	56	60
No. of children on SEN register	36	42	48	44
% of children on SEN register	21	21	24	21
No. of children with statements of educational need	*	*	6	6
No. of newcomer children	16	26	25	23

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

N/A not available

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Address urgently the significant areas for improvement
Achievements and standards	Important areas for improvement
Provision for learning	Important areas for improvement
Leadership and management	Requires significant improvement

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are very well-behaved throughout the school and are respectful of each other, their teachers and visitors. They engage willingly in their learning, completing the tasks their teachers set for them. The children are not given sufficient opportunity to participate in appropriately challenging activities; when they are, they display enthusiasm in their discussions and interactions with their peers. The teachers need to have a higher expectation of the children's capacity to manage and become more independent in their learning.
- 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, the majority of children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make progress in mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation.
- Overall, the children achieve good standards in literacy. Most of the children listen carefully to their peers and are confident in sharing their ideas and opinions during class discussions and debates. Across all year groups, the children demonstrate a good interest in books. By year 7 the most able children read fluently, speak knowledgeably about a wide range of children's literature and discuss their reading preferences. Most of the children have developed a neat handwriting style and present their work attractively. Across all key stages, the children's extended writing is not well enough developed and is an important area for improvement.

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

- Overall, the standards in numeracy are an important area for improvement. The attainment of the children in mathematics, as demonstrated by the work in their books, observation of the children in class and discussions with those in year 7, indicates that a significant minority of the children are challenged insufficiently, have limited flexibility in their mathematical thinking and do not reach the standards of which they are capable.

6. Provision for learning

- The quality of the planning is an important area for improvement. Both the medium-term and daily planning focus on tasks to be completed by the children rather than the learning outcomes. The teachers need to review the planning to: ensure there is a consistent approach throughout the school; provide sufficient challenge and progression in the learning so that the full range of the children's needs is addressed; and, ensure that evaluations of the children's learning inform effectively future practice.
- During the inspection, approximately three-quarters of the lessons observed were effective. In the most effective practice, in almost one-quarter of the lessons observed, the children were engaged purposefully in appropriately differentiated learning activities and well-chosen resources were used to promote their thinking. In the less effective practice, in almost one-quarter of the lessons observed, the lessons were activity-driven rather than learning-led and plenaries were not used effectively to consolidate the children's learning. Overall, the teachers need to give a higher priority to developing more fully the children's thinking skills through more open-ended and challenging activities and providing structured opportunities for the children to reflect on their learning.
- While most of the teachers mark the children's work regularly and provide positive and encouraging comments, there is undue variation in the quality of feedback given to the children. There are insufficient opportunities for them to reflect on their learning through self and peer-assessment and make improvements to their work.
- The provision for children with additional educational needs is good. The majority of individual education plans identify clearly the children's strengths and outline focused targets which address their literacy, numeracy and social and emotional needs. In addition, well-informed care plans support effectively those children identified with medical needs. Those children, who are identified by the staff as requiring support for their personal, social and emotional needs, benefit from effective support provided through the nurture room. They make good progress and are able to integrate successfully into daily routines, for example, during physical activity and through social interactions at break and lunch times. The classroom assistants support effectively small groups of children during the learning activities.
- The staff have reviewed recently the long-term planning for literacy which outlines clearly a broad and balanced programme. However, the first-hand evidence from the work in the children's books reflects limited opportunities for the children to write in a range of forms and for a variety of purposes. In particular, the children need more opportunities to plan and write extended pieces of work linked to class topics and themes, and make improvements to their written work through the re-drafting process. The children benefit from

regular opportunities to develop their talking and listening skills through circle time and school assemblies. Recently, the school has invested significantly in a range of reading books and an online reading programme which is beginning to improve the children's standard of reading. With increased access to a range of reading material, coupled with weekly visits to the local library, the children are developing well their enjoyment of literature.

- The planning, learning, teaching and assessment for mathematics across all key stages require improvement. The children have too few opportunities to develop their mathematical skills through practical, investigative and problem-solving work and to use mathematics in meaningful real-life contexts. Evidence from observations and children's books indicates a focus mainly on number; the children are not presented with a balanced coverage across all areas of mathematics.
- In the foundation stage, the children enjoy the range of activities which promote the development of the children's language and early mathematical skills. The staff have identified appropriately the need to improve further the quality of play-based learning, in particular, the planning and observations of the children's learning. The staff need to identify clearly the learning inherent in each of the areas of play and to make regular observations of the children's learning to inform the planning and ensure progression.
- The good quality of pastoral care in the school is characterised by a nurturing and inclusive ethos. The school is a welcoming, supportive and secure learning environment where the children develop their self-confidence and self-esteem. They treat each other and the adults with care and kindness. In discussions with the children in year 6, they spoke enthusiastically about their experiences in school, emphasising that they enjoy school and appreciate the support they receive from their teachers.
- The school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating through the healthy break scheme. The children have opportunities to grow vegetables and fruit in the attractive school garden and have made blackberry jam from their produce. The children participate regularly in physical activities, for example, outdoor play and yoga, which support them in their physical and emotional wellbeing.

7. Leadership and management

- The quality of leadership and management requires significant improvement. The senior leadership team and co-ordinators lack a systematic approach to the process of self-evaluation. The roles and responsibilities of co-ordinators are not well enough developed and there is insufficient collaboration with senior leadership in monitoring and evaluating the provision within their areas of responsibility, to ensure that the work done raises standards throughout the school.

- The school development plan², which is in its first year of the three year cycle, lacks a clear strategic direction and has not been informed by effective evaluation of the previous plan. There is insufficient rigour to the monitoring and evaluation by the senior leadership team and the co-ordinators regarding the quality and impact of the action plans to promote improvement in the children's learning experiences and outcomes.
- The school communicates effectively with parents through regular notes, the school website, a text messaging service and social media. The 'Early Bird' breakfast club is attended by many of the children who benefit from the opportunity to develop further their personal and social skills through the well-organised activities. Furthermore, a range of after school clubs, for example, homework, drama and football, enrich and extend the children's learning experiences. The school supports well the Polish community in the local area and provides a facility in which they meet.
- The board of governors has been reconstituted within the last year with the appointment of a number of new governors. Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be limited confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. In order to carry out effectively their statutory responsibilities the governors need to be better informed about the quality of learning and teaching through engagement with the learning co-ordinators.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The following area needs to be addressed: the board of governors, principal and staff need to ensure the completion of risk-assessments for all educational outings. 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

St Oliver Plunkett Primary 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 areas for improvement are for the:

- teachers to adopt a more rigorous and collaborative approach to planning learning and teaching and assessment in order to raise the achievements and standards of the children, particularly in mathematics and writing; and
- senior leadership team and learning co-ordinators to monitor and evaluate rigorously the impact of the actions to promote improvement within their areas of responsibility.

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 in 18 to 24 months.

²The school development plan is partially compliant with the requirements of the School Development Planning Regulations (NI) 2010.

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