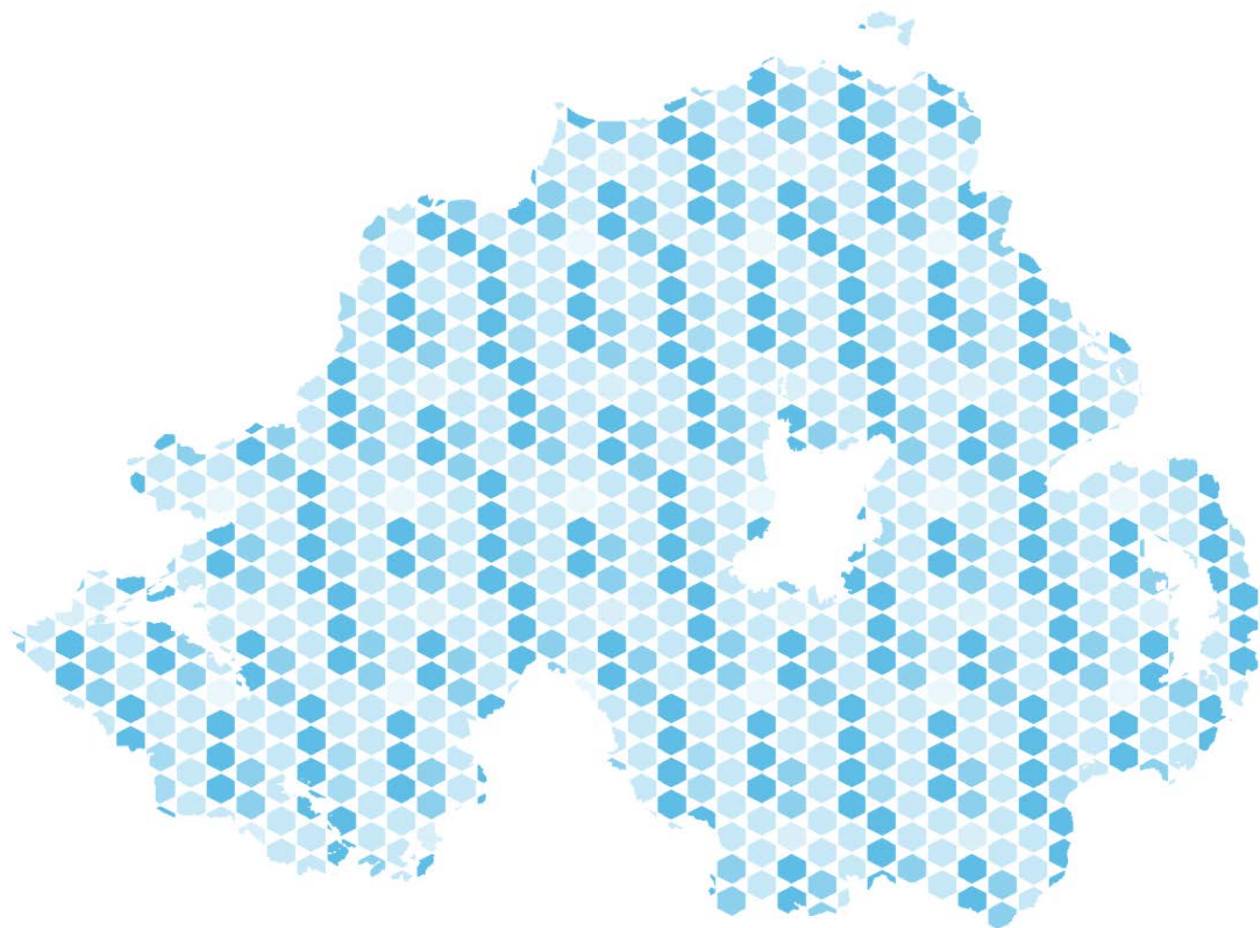


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

The Irish Society's Primary
School, Coleraine, County
Londonderry

Report of an Inspection in
April 2016



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing Inspection Services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
Department for Communities

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

Section	Page
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 confidential questionnaires.

Thirteen percent of parents and 52 percent of staff responded to the confidential questionnaires. The responses to the parental confidential questionnaire indicated that a majority of parents who responded are satisfied with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted their appreciation of the quality of the teaching and the educational experiences provided for the children. A majority of the staff completed the confidential questionnaire and their responses were almost all positive; in the written comments, they praised their teamwork as a staff and highlighted the limited resources within the school. The ETI has reported to the principal and a representative of the board of governors the main issues emerging from the parental and staff confidential questionnaires which include the availability of pre- and after-school care and communication with the school.

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 the nursery unit; and
- quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

The Irish Society's Primary School is a controlled primary school situated in Coleraine. The school was founded originally by 'The Honourable The Irish Society' in 1705 and maintains links with the Society; including four Society appointed members of the board of governors. Most of the children attending the school come from the local area. The school enrolment has decreased over the past four years and the school is operating well below its potential enrolment number. The percentage of children entitled to free school meals has remained steady, while the proportion requiring additional help with aspects of their learning has decreased slightly. At the time of the inspection, four of the eleven teaching staff were employed in a temporary capacity.

The Irish Society's Primary School	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Enrolment	310	287	263	266
% School attendance	95.7	95.8	95.1	N/A
% NI Primary school average	94.9	95.6	95.4	N/A
FSME Percentage ¹	15.4	17.7	18.6	16.1
No. of children on SEN register	69	61	53	50
% of children on SEN register	22.2	21.2	20.1	18.8
No. of children with statements of educational need	15	14	8	9
No. of newcomer children	16	21	21	19

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	Good
Provision for learning	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Nursery Unit	Very good

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are highly motivated and enthusiastic learners. They engage confidently with their peers in group work and collaborative learning from the early years and throughout the school. The children take pride in their work that is presented to a very good standard in their books.
- The school's performance data shows that most of the children make progress in English and mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation.
- From the foundation stage, the children listen attentively to stories, express clearly their thoughts and feelings and ask appropriate questions to find out information. By year 7, they are able to support their opinions with reasons, make very thoughtful contributions to class and group discussions and describe in detail real and imaginary experiences. Throughout the school, the children read for enjoyment, using a range of reading strategies, and the most able children in year 7 read fluently and show confident understanding of the writer's meaning. The children's standard of writing is very good; they plan and edit work to ensure a high degree of accuracy and write competently in a range of forms and for a variety of audiences.

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

- The standard achieved by the children in numeracy is good. By year 7, the most able children can apply their mathematical knowledge in meaningful contexts. They have a good understanding of the concepts across all areas of the mathematics curriculum; however, they need to develop further their flexibility in mathematical thinking and reasoning.
- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are making good progress in meeting the targets outlined in their individual education plans. Almost all of the children who require additional support with literacy and most of the children who require support with numeracy make progress in line with their ability or above expectation.
- The children in the nursery unit are very well settled and play for sustained periods at their selected activities. They have developed very good levels of independence and show imagination and creativity in their use of materials at the art, construction and role play areas. The children communicate effectively with each other, staff and visitors and they show a keen interest in books and early mark making; most of the children can write their own name. They use appropriately mathematical language as they count, sort, match and make comparisons as part of their play.
- The children achieve good standards in information and communication technology (ICT) and use their research and presentation skills to support and extend their learning in literacy, numeracy and the World Around Us.

6. Provision for learning

- In the most effective practice, in the majority of the lessons observed, the teachers plan effectively to meet the learning needs of all the children. The lessons are well paced and challenging; and, the learning is set in meaningful contexts which reflect the children's interests. The teachers use effective questioning to encourage the children to explain their thinking and develop further their understanding. Where teaching is less effective, in almost one-third of the lessons, there is insufficient challenge in the activities, particularly for the more able children. In improving further the learning and teaching, it will be important for all of the teachers to give a higher priority to developing more fully the children's thinking skills through creative, open-ended and challenging activities and provide more frequent structured opportunities for the children to reflect on and assess their learning. In addition, it is timely that the teachers have identified the need to review the medium-term planning and evaluations of the children's learning; the inspection findings endorse this important work.
- The children who require additional support with their learning are integrated well into the life of the school. They are identified early through, for example, teacher observations and the analysis of a range of internal assessment data. The school has developed effective links with a range of external agencies to support the children with, for example, motor-sensory development. The classroom assistants provide a good quality of learning support for the children. The staff have identified appropriately the need to improve the quality of the individual education plans to ensure that the short-term targets are more focused on the children's learning needs and on the strategies required to meet these needs. Furthermore, they need to track the progress made by the children throughout the year.

- The systematic approach to reading develops well the children's phonological awareness and the well-planned, guided reading activities provide very good opportunities for the children to explore and explain the main issues and themes in fiction and non-fiction texts. As a result of the recent whole-school focus on writing, the children have a secure understanding of the features of a variety of forms of writing and their application to real life contexts.
- The children experience a balanced coverage of number, shape and space, measures and data handling. The teachers are focusing appropriately on the development of the children's number work, providing good opportunities for the children to consolidate prior learning. Across the key stages, there is an over-reliance on worksheets and the teachers need to provide the children with greater opportunities to engage in investigative and problem-solving work in order to extend their mathematical thinking. The teachers have identified appropriately the need to develop the children's mental mathematics strategies and it will be important that all staff use these strategies and appropriate mathematical language in a more consistent manner throughout the school.
- The positive, stimulating learning environment provided in the nursery unit promotes effectively the children's development, decision making and self-management skills. The staff are caring and supportive in their approach; they 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 for the children. There is a need for the staff to review some aspects of the planning to ensure further challenge for the more able children through, for example, additional problem-solving opportunities in the play activities. An appropriate range of methods is used 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 staff need to develop further the opportunities for learning across the curriculum in the outdoor play area.
- The quality of pastoral care in the school and nursery unit is very good. The behaviour of the children is exemplary and there are high levels of mutual respect evident between the children and the adults in the school. The children are very proud of their school and, in discussion with the year 6 children, they highlighted how they enjoy their learning and the after-school activities in which they engage. There is a good range of reward systems in place in the school and the children's achievements both in and outside of school are recognised and celebrated regularly at assemblies. The school council provides a platform for the children to make suggestions for improvements in the school.
- The school and nursery unit give 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 have a clear focus on promoting the highest standards in learning and teaching. The school development planning² processes are of a good quality and are informed by the views of the school community and the effective use of data. The positive impact of the recent focus on writing and reading is evident in the good quality of both the learning and teaching in literacy. The key co-ordinators have a good professional knowledge and are empowered to lead and manage their area of learning. The senior management team need to develop further aspects of their leadership role through, for example, a more direct involvement in the monitoring and evaluation strategies regarding the quality of provision.
- There are purposeful links with the parents with good opportunities for meetings to discuss their children's progress. The children engage with the local community through visitors to the school and a range of educational visits which includes the good use of the nearby wood for the World Around Us topics. The impact of these visits and contacts are reviewed carefully by the staff and leadership to ensure that only those with the greatest educational benefit are undertaken. The school has good links with a range of local post-primary schools to support with the transition of the year 7 children.
- 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:
 - develop further the role of the governors in monitoring and evaluating the achievements and standards of the children; and
 - manage proactively the implications of the enrolment trends on the internal organisation of the school.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school and nursery unit have 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 Irish Society's Primary 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; in particular, the need for the senior leadership, co-ordinators and teachers to monitor and evaluate more rigorously the quality of the children's learning experiences, particularly in numeracy, in order to raise further the standards attained by all of the children.

² The school development plan meets the requirements of the School Development Planning Regulations (NI) 2010.

Health and Safety / Accommodation

1. There is a drainage problem in the nursery unit's outdoor play area which makes one area unsafe to use.
2. The perimeter of the school playground is not secure.

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