

Report of a Primary Inspection
St Ronan's Primary and Nursery School

December 2024



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Throughout the report the use of an asterisk * denotes further information included at Appendix 2.

1. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

St Ronan's Primary and Nursery School is a Catholic Maintained school with an enrolment of 350 children of whom three percent are newcomer children and 27% have free school meal entitlement. The school's main catchment area is the town of Lisnakea with some children attending come from the surrounding rural areas in the parish of Aghalurcher. Just over 22% (78) of the children have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN) and 17 of these children have a statement of SEN.

The school has experienced significant staff changes over the last few years. The acting principal was appointed in 2023 and an acting vice-principal was appointed in 2024. There are 12 primary classes and the nursery unit operates two part-time classes.

The school's board of governors is currently being reconstituted.

The school have a long standing and well-established shared education partnership with another local primary school.

The school received the 'Eco-School Green Flag'* award in June 2023 and the 'Autism Northern Ireland Impact Award'* in June 2024. Two classroom assistants are accredited nurture practitioners, and all staff have accessed the Education Authority's (EA) 'Whole School Nurture in Education Programme' (NEP)*.

B. VIEWS OF PARENTS, LEARNERS AND STAFF

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) issued online confidential questionnaires to year 7 children and all staff and parents/carers in advance of the inspection.

All of the year 7 children responded to the questionnaires of whom three quarters provided written comments. All of the children indicated that: they feel safe in school and know who to speak to if they have a concern; the teachers and other adults in the school treat them with care and respect; they are encouraged to set targets to improve their work; and they are encouraged to exercise daily. In the written comments, the children wrote that they are proud of their school and that they are well supported in their work to make progress.

The inspectors met with groups of children from years 3, 5 and 7. The children spoke about how they enjoy learning at the school, in particular, Information Communication Technology (ICT) and Physical Education (PE). They welcome the opportunity to assume leadership roles through, for example, the newly established 'Wellbeing Warriors', 'Eco-School Council' and 'The Digital Leaders' and they explained well how each has an important role to play in the life of the school.

Fifty-two percent (53) of the parents/carers responded to the online questionnaire, 19% (20) of whom provided additional written comments. All of the parents/carers indicated that their child is happy and safe at school and almost all stated that their child is making good progress in their learning. In the written comments parents/carers highlighted in particular their positive experiences with the school and expressed their appreciation for the helpful and caring staff.

The teaching and support staff responses were wholly positive. They have a clear understanding of the school's vision and highlighted how the school's community links contribute well to the children's learning outcomes. The staff emphasised the positive benefit the recent staff wellbeing training day had on their own emotional health and wellbeing, and how it has assisted them in their daily practice with the children.

A summary of all the questionnaire responses was shared with the principal and representative from the board of governors.

C. THE PROCESS OF INSPECTION

The ETI worked alongside St Ronan's Primary and Nursery School to consider how well the school:

- has identified and articulates its vision;
- prioritises actions to achieve the vision;
- overcomes the main challenges it faces;
- monitors and reviews progression to identify, celebrate and embed success; and
- grows and develops an inclusive community of learning.

2. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- St Ronan's Primary and Nursery school's recently reviewed vision, underpinned by the school's Catholic ethos to "inspire, nurture and respect" everyone, is realised through the school's welcoming, nurturing and inclusive environment.
- The school leadership team work well collaboratively and have re-established the full range of self-evaluation processes. All staff contributed to the recent review of the school's context, provision and the needs of the children and agreed appropriate priorities for development, including a focus on the emotional health and wellbeing of all.
- Curriculum planning in the primary and nursery school is detailed and reflects the interests of the children. It will be important that the school continues to review its curriculum planning to further differentiate the learning and ensure all of the children achieve in line with their ability.

- The children are happy and friendly and their behaviour is exemplary. They engage respectfully with their peers and adults and are proud to be members of St Ronan's school family.
- The recent establishment of new children's leadership teams is providing greater opportunity for the children to express their views, contribute to decision making and develop their leadership skills.
- The wide range of strategies and support interventions for the children identified as having SEN are impacting positively on the children's self-esteem and holistic development. Implementation of some of these strategies across the school would be beneficial to all children.
- Whole-staff professional learning is well aligned to the school's key priorities. The recent whole-school nurture training and the joint staff wellbeing training day with the school's neighbouring post primary school are impacting positively on both the staff and children's wellbeing and engagement in all aspects of school life.
- The well-established community links provide valuable opportunities to enhance the children's learning and all stakeholders are committed to forging additional partnerships for the benefit of all.

Areas for action:

- to ensure appropriate levels of challenge are provided for all children through a review of the progression in learning within the planning; and
- staff to access professional learning to support them in developing effectively their leadership roles within the school and support the achievement of the key priorities.

3. MAIN REPORT

A. SETTING THE VISION

The vision for St Ronan's Primary and Nursery school is in its final stages of review. Changes in staffing, including at leadership level prompted a timely and appropriate decision to reflect on the school's vision and align it with the school's current context. Consultations with governors, staff and the children informed the school's new shared vision and parent consultations on the school vision are planned to complete the review process. The new vision to "**inspire, nurture and respect everyone**" is underpinned by the school's Catholic ethos to promote the dignity, self-esteem and full development of each child. The staff and children create a welcoming, nurturing and inclusive environment through which the vision is realised.

The processes of self-evaluation have been re-established by the school leadership team and have informed appropriate key priorities for school development. These include reviewing the school vision; creating a positive learning ethos across the whole school community embracing the pupil voice; and improving the outcomes for all children across the curriculum with a focus on the emotional health and wellbeing of all. The one-year transitional school development plan (SDP) is detailed, clear and is guiding well the key priorities for improvement. There are robust processes in place to monitor and evaluate effectively the impact of the actions to bring about improvement for the children. The ongoing work on the emotional health and wellbeing of the children is impacting well on increasing their readiness to learn.

The recently appointed curriculum coordinators have clear, strategic plans for their area of learning in the school. The agreed and consistent approach to action planning is guiding their development work well. The co-ordinators have begun recently to implement procedures to monitor and evaluate improvements in their respective focused areas of learning across the school. It will be important for the new coordinators to access relevant staff professional learning to build capacity in their role and support them effectively in their work towards the achievement of the school's key priorities.

B. IMPLEMENTING AND IMPROVING TO ACHIEVE THE VISION

The school's detailed long- and medium-term curriculum planning reflects the statutory requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum and guides effectively the work of the staff. A range of qualitative and quantitative information is used to good effect by the staff to inform the short-term planning and meet the interests of the children. It will be important that appropriate challenge is provided to ensure all of the children make progress in line with their ability. Characteristics of the more effective planning, learning and teaching observed, include the skilful use of open-ended questioning and the opportunities for the children to collaborate in paired work and group activities which are developing successfully their thinking and problem-solving skills. In addition, the employment of a range of strategies, including adapted learning, engage all the children and ensure they make progress from their individual starting points.

The children are developing their digital skills well in regular sessions in the school's ICT suite and they all understand and know how to stay safe online. More opportunities to use digital technology naturally as part of their classwork will enable the children to develop and apply their digital skills across a range of contexts.

The development of the children's emotional health and wellbeing is a key focus within the SDP. The newly established 'Health and Wellbeing Team', comprising teachers, classroom assistants and the children in their role as 'Wellbeing Warriors', is promoting well the emotional health and wellbeing of all. The staff have completed the Education Authority's (EA) 'Whole-School Nurture in Education' (NEP) Training' and they use a whole-school nurture approach compassionately to deliver the curriculum. This is supporting well the development of the children's social, emotional and behavioural skills during all school activities. The school are in their second year of participation in the EA's 'Being Well Doing Well'* programme which focuses on a whole-school approach to emotional health and wellbeing. The

children have actively participated in a range of activities which are contributing well to their self-awareness and emotional resilience. To celebrate 'World Health Day', the children and staff collaboratively created a whole school display of handprints to promote the message that everyone has a 'hand' to play in being kind to each other and making the school a happy and safe place. During a celebratory assembly to mark the children's completion of a mental health programme, inspectors heard children explain how they have acquired coping strategies to regulate their emotions through, for example, accessing their own personalised jar of coping strategies, use of breathing techniques and their groupwork skills.

In year 3, 5 and 7 discussion groups with inspectors, all of the children reported a clear understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and a sound knowledge of who they can speak to in the school if they have a concern.

C. BUILDING EQUITY

The school's inclusive ethos is reflected in school policy and practice. All of the children in the school embrace diversity and show a clear understanding and acceptance of the differing needs of others. The staff have a clear oversight of the barriers to learning faced by some of the children and the SEN provision is well planned and monitored and ensures equitable access to learning opportunities for all. The early identification of children with additional needs, particularly in the Nursery and Foundation Stage classes, is met through use of relevant assessments, close liaisons with parents and active collaborations with external agencies such as the Health and Social Care Trust's* 'Regional Integrated Support for Education' (RISE NI)*, the Education Authority's Primary Behaviour Support & Provisions (PBS&P)* and Education Psychology services.

There is a consistent approach to the development of individual education plans (IEP) for the children who have been identified as having SEN. The plans have appropriate development targets to meet the needs of the children and are well informed through collaboration with parents, staff, external agencies and the children themselves. The children have high expectations for themselves and work well towards achieving their targets for development. The IEPs are reviewed regularly and show clearly the children's progress from their individual starting points.

To enable all children to experience success in their learning, the school provides effective small group literacy intervention support which is delivered by school staff. Close collaboration between the child's class teacher and SEN teacher is ensuring the planning reflects the individual needs of the child. The intervention sessions are well planned and paced, highly stimulating and impact positively on the children's self-esteem and their language and communication skills. The children are happy and engaged with their learning.

Staff use well the knowledge and skills they have developed through engagement in relevant staff professional learning, including Solihull* training and Autism Northern Ireland training, to respond to the diverse needs of the children. They use competently a wide range of adaptive and appropriate strategies, including visual and differentiated language cues and prompts, to support the children in their learning. The implementation of some of these strategies across the school would

be relevant and beneficial to all children. The Learning Support Assistants are very well deployed and use knowledgeably a range of strategies such as brain breaks, sensory resources, calm corners and visits to the school's sensory room to assist the children to self-regulate and support their purposeful and meaningful engagement in their learning.

D. DEFINING, CELEBRATING AND EMBEDDING SUCCESS

The highly pastoral approach of all staff is contributing well to the continuous development of the children's learning dispositions and ensuring they experience success from their individual starting points. The children engage confidently in their learning and, when opportunity is provided, accept readily the chance to lead their learning, make independent choices and access appropriate resources to support and extend their learning. The children are happy and friendly, and their behaviour is exemplary. They interact respectfully with their peers and adults and are proud to be members of St. Ronan's school family.

The staff make effective use of a variety of assessments to baseline, monitor and review the children's progress in learning across the school. The children in a significant minority of the classes set personal, manageable, and achievable targets which is effectively allowing them to improve and build on their individual successes. This approach should be shared across all classes to enable all of the children to reflect regularly on their personal targets and enable them to self-assess their individual successes.

The well-planned transition processes are effectively supporting the children to move smoothly through their education journey. The nursery staff make home visits and visits to the local Surestart before the children start in nursery and operate nursery stay and play sessions for parents/carers at the beginning of the school's academic year to enable smooth transitions for the children into nursery. Collaboration and sharing of class information between all teachers at the time of class transitions is well structured and is enabling children's progress and success to be built upon. Participation by the year seven children in workshops hosted by the three post-primary feeder schools and in the EA's four week post primary school transition programme is supporting well the children's readiness for the next stage of their educational journey.

The children's achievements and successes are celebrated widely throughout the school, through displays and photographs and communicated digitally with the parents and wider community through the school website and on each class's "proud cloud". Weekly assemblies value, recognise and acknowledge the children's talents and achievements. The children reported feeling special and proud on receipt of certificates, stickers and awards to mark their achievements. Parents are invited to attend special assemblies throughout the year and a focus group of parents, who met with inspectors, shared their delight at being able to attend these and celebrate the successes of their child's learning journey.

E. GROWING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNING

The staff value highly the children's participation in the life of the school. The newly developed leadership opportunities, such as the 'Wellbeing Warriors', 'Digital Leaders' and roles within the Eco and school councils, provide the children with regular opportunities to express their views on school life and begin to develop their leadership skills. The school council's bi-monthly newspaper "The Rónán" provides the children with an opportunity to develop their writing and digital skills and share school news with the wider community and raises funds for school resources.

The school use effectively the facilities in their local environment to extend the children's learning, through, for example, the local Gaelic club and pitch for the development of physical skills and educational visits to 'Gortnacharn Nursing Home' for participation in their intergenerational programme to improve the children's connection with their community. Extended learning opportunities for the children are facilitated through a well-established working partnership with the adjacent post-primary school, for example, the children participate in a science leadership programme conducted by the post-primary students.

The school leadership team are involved in the EA Pathways to Partnership Programme* and the Fermanagh Principal's Cluster Group through which the staff benefit from sharing professional learning relating to the development of common themes across schools.

The parents are kept well informed about their child's learning through parent teacher meetings, school newsletters and through information on the school's website and digital communication app. Their engagement in parenting programmes, such as, the nursery's 'Getting Ready to Learn'* stay and play sessions assist them to support and extend their children's learning at home. The school has well-established and meaningful connections with their parent teacher and friend's association and their local parish through which they participate in charity events which significantly contributes to the children's understanding of a sense of a Christian community.

F. CHILD PROTECTION

At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by St Ronan's Primary and Nursery School demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance.

4. GOING FORWARD

St Ronan's Primary and Nursery School demonstrates a clear commitment to living out its vision, to '**inspire, nurture and respect**' everyone in a welcoming, nurturing and inclusive school. The acting leadership teams are well placed to embed the changes made recently and bring about further improvement.

The inspection has highlighted areas for action to enable St Ronan's Primary and Nursery School to achieve its vision more fully. The ETI, through the engagement of the District Inspector, will continue to work with the school as it takes forward the areas for action on its continual journey of improvement.

5. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: QUANTITATIVE TERMS

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%

APPENDIX 2: NOTES

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Eco Schools Green Flag

The Eco-Schools Green Flag is an internationally recognised award for excellence in environmental action and learning.

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Autism Northern Ireland Impact Award

The Autism NI Impact Award for Education is a professional learning training package through the Autism Northern Ireland charity which aims to support schools of all sizes to provide an inclusive and welcoming environment for autistic pupils and staff.

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The Nurture in Education Programme (NEP)

The NEP programme is an early intervention and preventative framework that seeks to embed nurturing approaches and ethos within all schools. The programme promotes the key principles of attachment, consistency, resilience and trauma informed practice at a whole school level by utilising the six principles of nurture to enable children who attend school, in challenging circumstances, to begin to have more consistency and stability in their lives.

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Education Authority: The Being Well Doing Well programme

The Being Well Doing Well (BWDW) programme is part of The Children & Young People's Emotional Health & Wellbeing in Education Framework. The programme aims to support schools (nursery, primary, post primary, special and EOTAS) to develop a Whole School Approach to Emotional Health and Wellbeing.

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Health and Social Care Trust

The Health and Social Care Trust provides a range of health and social care services to people across a geographical area in Northern Ireland.

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Regional Early Intervention Service (RISE NI)

RISE NI is a regional early intervention service which supports children in pre-school educational and mainstream primary school settings by working closely with parents and education staff to help children develop the foundation skills for learning i.e. speech, language, communication, sensory-motor, visual perception, social, emotional and behaviour skills.

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The Primary Behaviour Support & Provisions (PBS&P) Service

The Primary Behaviour Support & Provisions (PBS&P) Service supports the personal, social and educational development of pupils with a Special Educational Need (SEN) arising from social, behavioural, emotional and wellbeing needs.

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Solihull approach

The Solihull Approach is about emotional health and wellbeing for all children, their parents, carers and grandparents. We are passionate about sensitive relationships, early years support and understanding brain development to help nurture kind, emotionally aware children as they grow.

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EA Pathways to Partnership Programme

This is a programme run by the Education Authority that seeks to support primary and nursery schools on their journey to being part of a Professional Learning Community.

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Getting Ready to Learn

The Getting Ready to Learn (GRTL) programme aims to support pre-school education providers to encourage and develop parental involvement in children's early learning.

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