

PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Columbkille's Primary School,
Nursery Unit and Irish Medium
Unit, Carrickmore

Report of an Inspection
in December 2011



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%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Columbkille's Primary School includes a Nursery Unit and Irish-medium Education (IME) Unit and is situated in the town of Carrickmore in County Tyrone. The children attending the school come from the town and surrounding rural areas. The school enrolment has steadily increased over the past five years and currently there are 276 children enrolled in the primary school, including 53 in the IME unit. There are 26 children in the nursery unit. At the time of the inspection, approximately 21% of the children in the school were entitled to free school meals. The school has registered 18% of the children as having special educational needs.

FOCUS

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy;
- the quality of provision for learning; and
- the quality of leadership and management including the school's processes for self-evaluation leading to improvement.

OVERALL FINDING OF THE INSPECTION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is very good; the quality of pastoral care is outstanding. The school has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

Achievements and Standards

The quality of the children's achievements and standards is very good.

- In **English and mathematics**, most of the children attain very good **standards** and for a significant minority of the children the attainments are outstanding. By the end of key stage (KS) 2, almost all the children are confident orally, can read competently and are able to write for a range of purposes and audiences. The children apply their learning in mathematics across the curriculum and in meaningful situations based on their experiences and interests.
- The children identified with **special educational needs** make very good progress from the nursery unit through the school and achieve standards in line with their ability.
- The children in the **IME unit** make very good progress in Irish, English and mathematics and achieve standards in line with their ability.

Provision for Learning

The provision for learning is very good.

- The **children's behaviour** is exemplary; they are polite and welcoming to visitors. They are well-motivated and display very positive attitudes to their learning; they interact confidently with their teachers and with one another.
- The teachers and support staff are hard-working and are committed to the education and care of the children. The **quality of the teaching** observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding; in most of the lessons observed it was good or better.
- The provision for **special educational needs** is very good; the children in the school and in the nursery unit benefit from early intervention and effective in-class support. There are well-established links with the parents and with support agencies to enhance the provision.
- The quality of the arrangements for **pastoral care** in the school and in the nursery unit is outstanding. The very inclusive ethos values the contribution of every child. There are very strong links established with the community which extend the children's learning experiences.
- The school and nursery unit have very good comprehensive arrangements in place for **safeguarding** children. These arrangements reflect the child protection guidance issued by the Department of Education.
- The school gives excellent attention to promoting **healthy eating** and physical activity. The children develop an understanding of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle through the provision of healthy breaks and lunches and the opportunities for physical activity throughout the day.

Leadership and Management

The quality of leadership and management is **very good**.

- The **Principal** provides outstanding leadership and management. He has led the school staff successfully to establish an effective approach to continuous improvement which involves the children, staff, governors and the wider community. He receives a high level of very good support from the **Vice-principal**.
- The **Board of Governors** are very supportive and have a strategic role that is underpinned by a sound knowledge and understanding of the life and work of the school.
- **The co-ordinators provide good leadership**; they promote effectively collaborative approaches, through curricular teams, to policy development and planning.
- The whole-school **self-evaluation and school development planning** processes are excellent. There is a culture of collecting qualitative and quantitative data to identify low and underachievement, which helps to inform and effect further improvements in the standards attained by the children in literacy and numeracy.

- The **Nursery Unit** and **Irish-medium Education Unit** are appropriately prioritised in the school development plan and are an integral part of the whole-school improvement process.

CONCLUSION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is very good; the quality of pastoral care is outstanding. The school has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

No follow-up inspection is required.

ST COLUMBKILLE'S NURSERY UNIT

Key Findings of the Inspection

- The children are well-behaved; they enjoy their activities and almost all are able to play independently and collaboratively for sustained periods of time.
- There are many examples of very good staff interaction and involvement which support the development the children's language and learning. The staff is very skilful in generating a sense of enjoyment and fun in the play.
- The broad and balanced programme provides good to very good learning experiences in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The standard of the children's mathematical understanding is a key strength of the nursery unit.
- The programme for indoor play is well-planned and informed effectively by the very good use made of on-going assessment records.
- There is a very positive, welcoming ethos and very good pastoral care which builds the children's confidence and self-esteem effectively.
- Very good quality provision is made for those children with additional learning needs.

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this nursery unit is very good. The nursery is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: St Columbkille's Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 07/12/11**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 203-2737** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Short**

B.

School Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Year 1 Intake	34	40	32	32	38
Enrolments					
Primary	257	260	263	256	276
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	26	26	26	26	26
Special Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Irish Medium Unit	41	49	53	49	53

The enrolment for the current year is the figure on the day of notification of inspection. For previous years it is the figure in the annual return to the Department of Education.

The calculations at C and D should be based on the total of the primary and reception enrolments only.

- C. Average Attendance for the Previous School Year (expressed as a percentage): 96.7% **NI Avg Att: 94.7%**

Average Attendance for those children on the Special Educational Needs Register:

- | | Primary & Reception | Nursery Unit | Special Unit | Irish Medium Unit |
|---|---|-----------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| D. i. Number of Teachers (including the principal and part-time teachers): (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours) | 10 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): | 21.2 | NI PTR: 20.2 | | |
| iii. Average Class Size: English Medium | 24.8 | Irish Medium | 17.6 | |
| iv. Class Size (Range): English Medium | 24 to 28 | Irish Medium | 15 to 20 | |
| v. Ancillary Support:
Number of Hours Per Week : | i. Clerical support: | | 36 | |
| | ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support: | | 102.5 | |
| | iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | | 90 | |
| vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: | | | | 1.48% |
| vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: | | | | 18.4% |
| viii. Number of children who are not of statutory school age: | | | | 0 |
| ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: | | | | 21% |
| x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2010/11 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics, and Irish (in Irish-medium schools): | English
81.3% | Mathematics
87.5% | Irish
N/A | |

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON ST COLUMBKILLE'S PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY UNIT

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3
Attending full-time	26	0	0
Attending part-time	0	0	0
Under 3 years of age*	∅	0	0
With statement of special educational needs	∅	0	0
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	0	0	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	∅	0	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	∅	0	0
With English as an additional language	0	0	0

* On 1 July.

** The stages refer to those set out in the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.

∅ Relates to fewer than 5 cases.

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	3.8%
Average attendance for the previous year.	95.1%

2. Duration of Sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
9:30AM to 2PM.	-	-

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	1	0
Nursery Assistants (qualified)	2	0
Nursery Assistants (non-qualified)	0	0

Number of: ***	
Students	0
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued	26
Percentage returned	50%
Number of written comments	6

THE VIEWS OF THE PARENTS, TEACHERS, GOVERNORS, SUPPORT STAFF AND CHILDREN

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents, the teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, and for a group of children from year 6, which included representatives of the school council, to meet the inspectors.

One hundred and forty one questionnaires were issued to the parents of the children in **the primary school**: 78 (55%) were returned to Inspection Services branch (ISB) and 41 contained additional written comments. Almost all of the responses from the questionnaire were highly affirmative of the school. The written comments were mostly positive and praised the dedication of the Principal and the professionalism of the staff, particularly in ensuring that the children are happy and settled in school. A few matters raised about the children's school experiences were shared with the Principal and the chair of the Board of Governors (governors).

In the **nursery unit**, 26 questionnaires were issued to the parents of the children; 13(50%) were returned to ISB and six contained additional written comments. The comments indicate that the parents value the nursery provision highly; they appreciate the caring staff and the progress made by the children in the nursery unit.

Four of the **governors** met with the inspection team and emphasised the importance of the school in the community. They expressed confidence in the leadership of the Principal and praised the commitment of the staff and the parents to ensuring that the provision in the nursery unit, the IME unit and the primary school was of the highest standard. A group of the **parents** also met with the inspectors. They praised the approachable Principal and staff and the high level of pastoral care which the school provides.

Twelve of the **teachers** and eleven of the **support staff** completed confidential questionnaires. Almost all of the teachers and the support staff were highly positive about all aspects of the school. In addition, eleven of the teachers and six of the support staff included written comments indicating high levels of satisfaction for the pleasant, working environment and the supportive staff and Principal.

The inspectors met a **group of year 6 children**, which included two representatives of **the school council**; they talked readily about their enjoyable educational experiences and about the support and care provided by the teachers and the support staff. The children are aware of what to do if they have worries about their safety and well-being.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Visibility panels are absent in the classroom doors
- The controlled access on the rear door of the main building and on the mobile classroom door are not working.

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