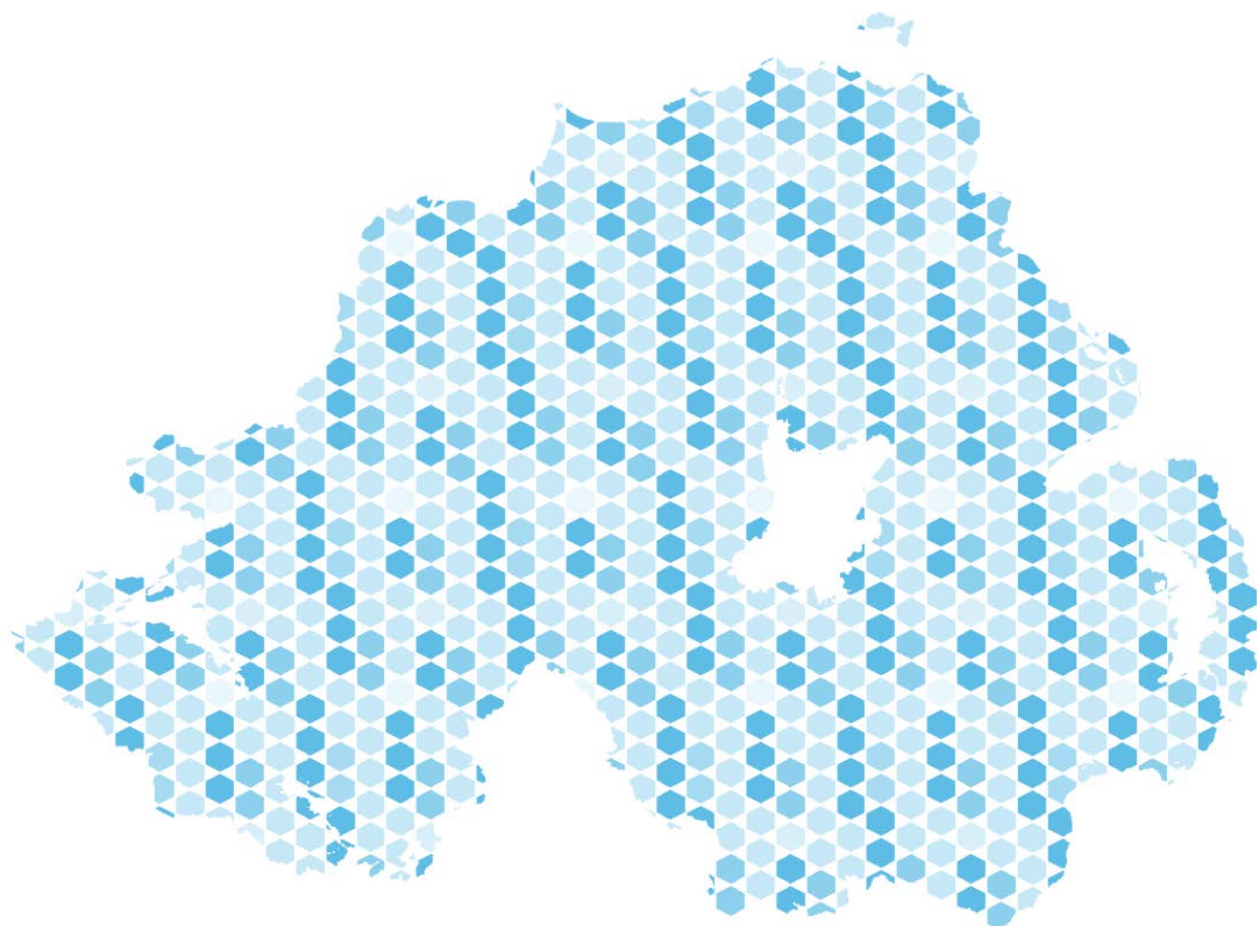


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Mary's Primary School
Dechomet, Castlewellan,
County Down

Maintained, co-educational

Report of an Inspection in
October 2016

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 representatives from the governors;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Twenty eight percent of parents responded to the questionnaire and a majority included written comments. Almost all of the responses were highly positive; in particular, parents praised the dedicated, professional approach of the staff and the focus on the development of the individual child. All staff members completed the questionnaire and the responses were totally positive. The written responses highlighted the collegial spirit within the staff, the very good working relationships, high staff morale and the capable, supportive principal. The ETI has reported to the principal and representatives of the board of governors the main findings 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 with a particular focus on literacy (including how the school is addressing low attainment and underachievement where applicable);
- quality of provision for learning with a particular focus on literacy including the reception provision; and
- quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

St Mary's Primary School is a maintained primary school situated in the Parish of Drumgooland in the townland of Dechomet. A small number of children are in the Reception provision included in the composite year 1 and 2 class. The majority of children attending the school live in the local and surrounding area and most travel by bus to the school. The enrolment over the past four years has fluctuated slightly while the percentage of children entitled to free school meals has increased. The school building has recently been modernised and a new sports pitch is currently being constructed. The school's vision statement that "every child matters" pervades the life and work of the school.

St Mary's Primary School	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Enrolment	88	86	80	83
% School attendance	96.3	96	96.6	97.5
% NI Primary school average	95.6	95.4	N/A	N/A
FSME Percentage ¹	19.3	24.4	25	26.5
No. of children on SEN register	10	12	12	8
% of children on SEN register	11.3	13.95	15	9.6
No. of children with statements of educational need	*	*	*	*

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

N/A not available

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Achievements and standards	Very good
Provision for learning	Very good
Leadership and management	Very good
Reception	Good

5. Achievements and standards

- Children's progress, achievements and standards in literacy throughout the school are very good. In the foundation stage, the children are developing well their oracy skills through, for example, the effective play plenary session. Throughout the school, the children write for meaningful purposes across the range of forms of writing and their work is presented to a high standard. In year 7, the children talk with enthusiasm about the material they are reading and their favourite authors; they read with expression and use their word attack and phonics skills to assist them when they meet new words. The children integrate information and communication technology (ICT) well into their learning and employ a variety of programmes to support their learning and research within their topic work.
- The achievements and standards of the small number of children in the Reception provision are good. At this early stage of the year, the children are beginning to settle into class routines and engage in aspects of learning within their play. They are developing their social and communication skills; listen to and respond to stories and are able to speak about their learning.
- The children's dispositions and skills are very good; they demonstrate effective personal and social skills, working well with others. The children are developing well their leadership skills through the effective School Council, the reading partnership programme with year 3 children and the playground 'buddy' scheme.

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

6. Provision for learning

- The quality of the provision for literacy is very good. Most of the lessons observed were good or better and effective in developing the children's learning. The teachers correct regularly the children's work and, in the most effective practice, they provide supportive written and oral feedback which includes suggestions as to how the children can improve further their work. The classroom assistants work closely with the class teachers to provide well-targeted support for the children.
- The teachers ensure continuity and progression in the children's learning through their planning which is matched closely to the needs of the children. Very good long-term planning is in place throughout the key stages, the plans highlight the cross-curricular aspect of literacy with a clear focus on connected learning across the curriculum. The school is currently focused on the development of the forms of writing and this was evident through the range of writing opportunities presented to the children.
- The Reception children access an appropriate play based programme. The staff model good play and develop the children's language and thinking through discussions and open-ended questions. Incidental learning opportunities are used well to further the children's understanding and consolidate learning.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is outstanding. A key strength of the pastoral provision is the effective use made of consultation with the children to inform and enrich the learning experiences.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership and management have a clear vision for providing high quality education for all children and are committed to the holistic development of the children.
- The school improvement process is linked clearly to a comprehensive school development plan that has involved extensive consultation with the staff, children, parents and governors. The key priorities of the school development plan focus appropriately on improving further the quality of the children's learning experiences and the standards that they attain. The school makes effective use of data and other assessment information to inform target-setting and identify individual needs. The associated action plans focus appropriately on the learning needs of the children and guide well the monitoring, evaluation and improvement work in the school.
- There are very effective arrangements in place for communicating and consulting with parents to involve them appropriately in their children's education and the ongoing work of the school. The very good links with other schools, external agencies and the community enrich the children's learning experiences and broaden the curriculum. The coaching delivered by the local football club, allows the children to engage in quality physical activity and further develop their movement skills.

- Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors bring a wide range of skill and expertise to their role and are well informed of all aspects of the work of the school. They carry out their roles supportively and understand well the challenges and opportunities faced by the school. In discussions with the inspectors, the governors praised the principal and the staff of the school for their commitment and dedication to the education and pastoral needs of 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 key stage 2 reported that they are happy and secure in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their well-being.
- It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the children and the staff.

8. Overall effectiveness

St Mary's Primary 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.

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