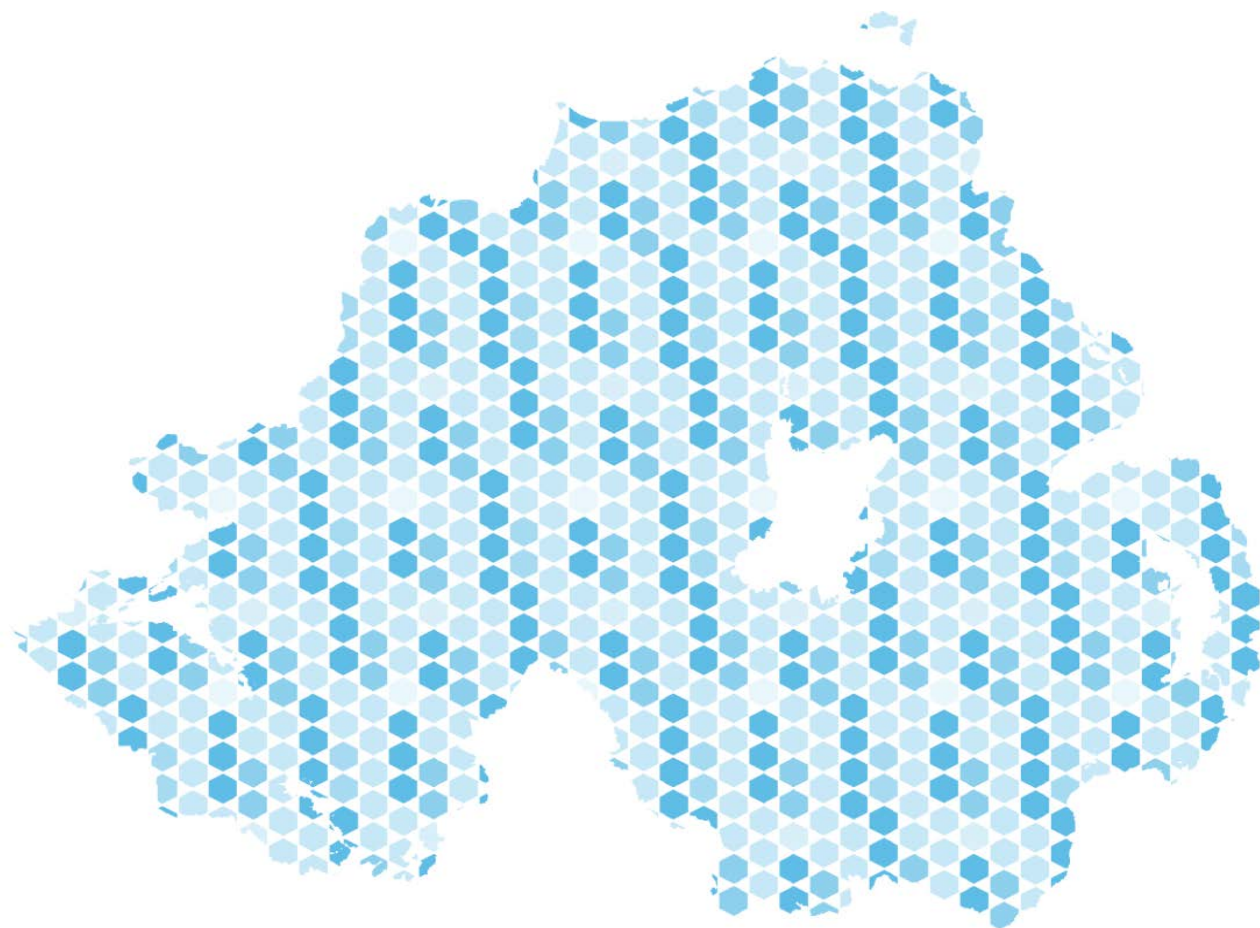


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St John's Primary School,
Londonderry

Maintained, co-educational

Report of an Inspection in
November 2016



Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



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 Achievements 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	4
8. Overall effectiveness	4

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: <https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/together-towards-improvement-primary>.

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, a majority of the teaching and small number of the support staff responded to the confidential questionnaires. The responses to the parental confidential questionnaire indicated high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted: the high standing of the school in the local community; the friendly, approachable staff; and, the varied learning and teaching experiences provided for their children. The responses to the teaching and support staff questionnaire were also positive; they emphasised the child-centred, inclusive approach to the work of the school, the visionary leadership of the principal, the good opportunities for staff training and development and the support of the governors. The ETI has reported to the principal and representative of the board of governors the main findings and comments emerging from the parental and staff confidential questionnaires.

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 John's Primary School is a Catholic Maintained primary school located in the Creggan area of Derry. Most of the children attending the school come from the local area. The school is situated in one of the most socially and economically deprived areas of Northern Ireland, consequently, two-thirds of the children are entitled to free school meals. The school's commitment to Shared Education is evidenced through extensive links with a school in the Waterside area of the City and participation in the Shared Education Signature Project. The school is proud of its status as a Fair Trade School and Eco School.

St John's Primary School	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Enrolment	583	577	557	563
% School attendance	94.3%	93.5%	94.1%	N/A
% NI Primary school average	95.6	95.4	N/A	N/A
FSME Percentage ¹	66%	67%	67%	67%
No. of children on SEN register	119	119	117	112
% of children on SEN register	20%	20%	21%	19%
No. of children with statements of educational need	15	15	12	17

Source: data as held by the school.
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

5. Achievements and standards

- Most of the children in the school, and almost all of the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning, achieve very good standards in literacy. They demonstrate growing confidence in discussing their learning in small and larger groups, express their own ideas and listen respectfully to others. The children's written work is of a high standard; they plan, edit and review their work to produce very good quality writing. By year 7, they read with confidence and display high levels of interest in reading for enjoyment across a wide range of authors.
- From the foundation stage, the children's early numeracy concepts are well developed through a combination of play-based learning and specific numeracy lessons; they can sort, match, count, and make effective comparisons in measurement. In key stage (KS) 1, they extend further their understanding in the areas of number, shape and space, data handling, measures and in the processes of mathematics. There is a variation in the children's progression in numeracy across the key stages; however, by the end of KS2, the children demonstrate very good capabilities in mental mathematics activities and can explain the strategies they use to arrive at solutions to mathematical challenges. There is a very good standard of presentation in the children's books.
- Across the school the children use competently information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance and develop their skills and capabilities; as a result, most of the children, achieve very good standards in ICT.

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

- The children's behaviour is exemplary; they are respectful towards their peers and the staff and engage very well with visitors. Almost all demonstrate very good dispositions for learning, respond positively to the teachers' expectations, engage enthusiastically with their activities and demonstrate very good levels of independence.

6. Provision for learning

- There is a very good, coherent approach to planning, learning and assessment throughout the school. The planning guides the teachers effectively in their work and ensures variety and progression in most of the learning. Across the school, there is variation in the quality of the evaluations of learning; in the most effective practice account is taken of individual, group and whole class responses to inform future lessons. On occasions, the lesson evaluations do not reflect upon the children's learning and subsequent lessons, therefore, do not include strategies to support further the children's learning needs. The children's books are marked regularly and, in the best practice, the teacher's written comments provide clear guidance on ways to improve further their work.
- During the inspection, a majority of the lessons observed were very good or better. In these lessons, the children settled quickly to their learning and there was a good balance between teaching and learning with the children playing an active role throughout. The highly effective use of ICT engages the children well and supports their learning in literacy and numeracy. In the most effective practice, the teachers recapped on previous learning, established connections across the curriculum and skilfully asked questions to extend the children's responses. The learning activities for those children identified as requiring additional support were linked effectively to their individual education plans, targets and strategies. In a minority of lessons, the lack of a plenary session resulted in missed opportunities to consolidate learning. In a small number of the KS1 classes observed, there was over-direction of the learning by the teachers resulting in lower levels of engagement by the children. In order to ensure greater consistency of high quality learning experiences for all of the children it will be important to disseminate further the very good and outstanding practice existing in the school.
- An appropriate and varied range of teaching strategies are used well to foster the children's enjoyment of, interest in and disposition to literacy across the curriculum. The teachers' planning and practice for literacy are effective in developing the children's skills in talking, listening, reading and writing through effective paired and group work. The teachers foster successfully an interest and enjoyment of reading and writing through the very good use of the local library, various writing competitions and the school's reading programme. The effective support programme, for those children identified as being high, low or underachieving, develops further the children's literacy skills and has a demonstrably positive impact on the outcomes they achieve.
- A range of teaching strategies for mathematics are used well to develop the children's understanding skills and interest in numeracy across the curriculum. The teachers use short, engaging, mental mathematics introductions to each lesson well. In most of the lessons there is inclusive, purposeful and well planned group work that is used to good effect to develop the children's mathematics skills in participative team work. The children require extended opportunities, particularly the more able, to engage in open-ended investigations and problem-solving challenges.

- The quality of the pastoral care is outstanding; there is a caring and supportive ethos and a culture of mutual respect across the school. The children are praised and rewarded for their good behaviour regularly and report that they feel valued in school, enjoy learning and are well-supported to achieve. The children's self-esteem is developed well in class and through access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities that builds their maturity and self-confidence.

7. Leadership and management

- The senior leadership team provide highly effective strategic leadership based on a shared vision for school improvement which is focused appropriately on providing the highest quality experiences and outcomes for the children. They set a positive tone for the work of the school and are supported very well by the staff.
- There is a well embedded culture of reflection and self-evaluation in the school which involves parents, children, staff and governors and it is evident throughout all aspects of the school's provision. A very effective school development plan is in place and is focused clearly on raising further the very good standards achieved by the children. The key priorities identified in the school development plan are appropriate and there are regular opportunities for staff to evaluate the school's progress in effecting improvement.
- There are well-established links with local pre- and post-primary schools to ensure effective transitions in the children's educational programme. The school maintains strong, purposeful links with the local community to enhance further the children's learning. The parents are informed well about the life and work of the school through, for example, regular meetings and the recently updated school website and are encouraged to play an active role in their child's education. The school works effectively with a wide range of agencies to support and benefit the children.
- 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 are highly committed to the whole school community. They are well informed about all aspects of the life and work of the school and are involved appropriately in the key decisions regarding the strategic direction and future developments of the school.
- 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 KS2 understand the school rules and the importance of keeping safe. They 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 John'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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