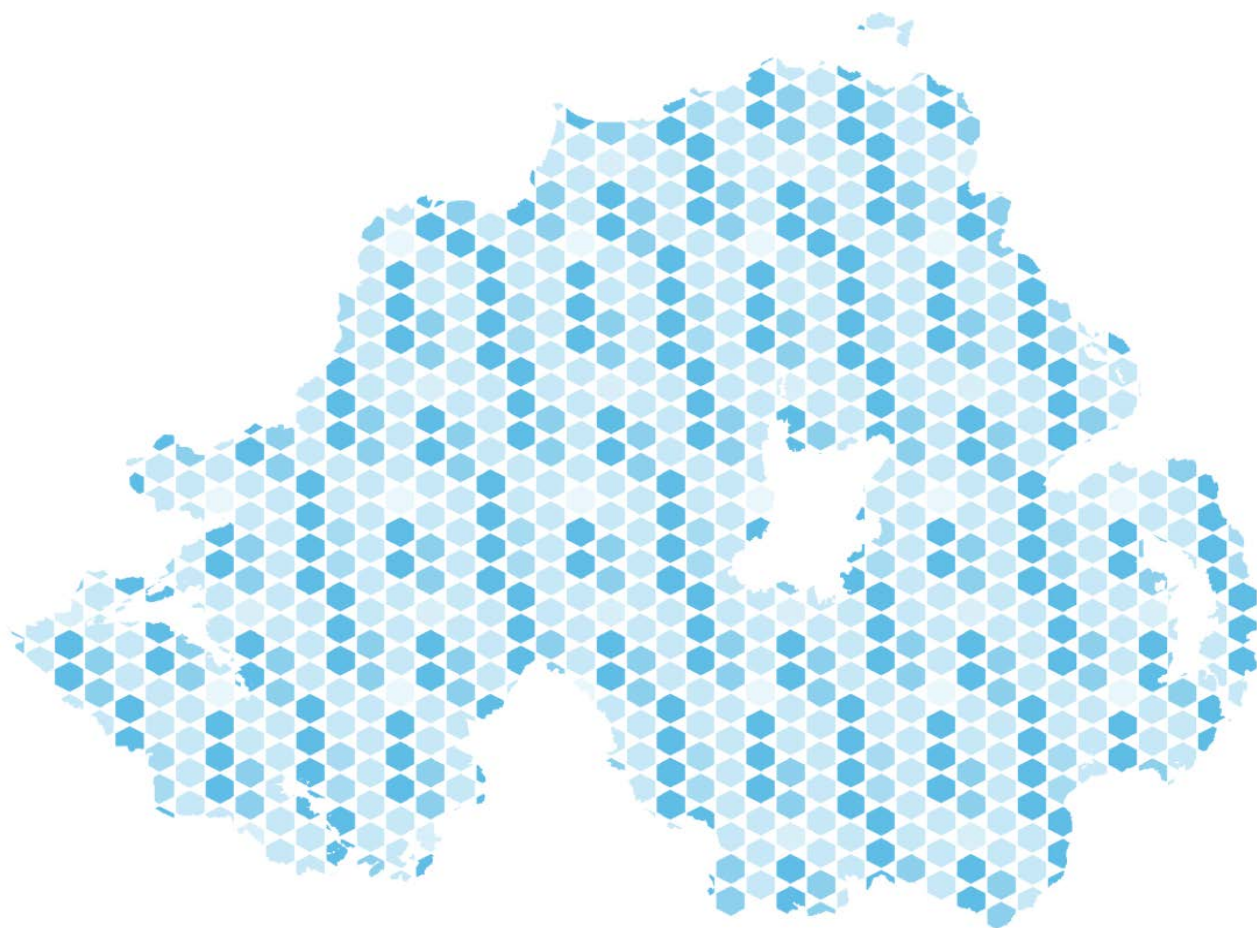


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Mary's on the Hill Primary
School, Newtownabbey,
County Antrim

Maintained, co-educational

Report of an Inspection in
September 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.

A small number of parents responded to the questionnaire. Overall, parental responses indicated high levels of satisfaction with the school's provision. In particular, the parents highlighted: the excellent leadership; the friendly, caring and supportive staff; and, the very good progress of their children. Almost all of the teaching staff and a majority of the support staff responded to the online questionnaire. The staff were wholly positive about the work of the school and emphasised the excellent working relationships that exist at all levels which empower the staff to express their views openly. The ETI has reported to the principal and representatives of the board of governors the views of the parents and staff and the main issues emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

2. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interests 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 Mary's on the Hill Primary School is a maintained primary school situated in the Parish of St Mary's on the Hill in Glengormley. All of the children attending the school come from the surrounding area. The enrolment has increased steadily over the past four years. The percentage of children entitled to free school meals has decreased slightly while the proportion of children requiring additional help with aspects of their learning has increased. The principal has been in post since April 2016 and, at the time of the inspection, there were five substitute teachers employed in the school. The school has an orchestra, string orchestra and a choir and a significant number of children are learning to play an instrument.

St Mary's on the Hill Primary School	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Enrolment	347	351	363	378
% School attendance	96.2	96.5	95.9	N/A
% NI Primary school average	94.9	95.2	94.1	N/A
FSME Percentage ^[1]	18	18	18	15
No. of children on SEN register	45	48	70	77
% of children on SEN register	14	14	19.2	20
No. of children with statements of educational need	*	*	*	*
No. of newcomer children	14	26	25	32

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

5. Achievements and standards

- Across all key stages, the standards achieved by the children in literacy are very good. From an early age, the children demonstrate very good talking and listening skills; they interact very well with one another and with adults and are keen to talk about their work; they express clearly their ideas and opinions. As they progress through the school, the children become increasingly confident in their communication skills and their use of vocabulary is very good. The children write independently for a range of purposes and audiences and the quality and presentation of the work produced, at all key stages, is high. During the inspection, a group of year 7 children engaged meaningfully in discussions with the inspection team about the types of books they enjoy and their favourite authors; they demonstrated a very good appreciation of books and read with fluency, intonation and understanding. By the end of key stage (KS) 2, most of the children are confident in choosing appropriate software to express their ideas through interactive presentation.
- Across all key stages, the standards in mathematics are very good. From the foundation stage, the children talk confidently about number, shape, handling data and measures using the appropriate mathematical language. As they progress through the school, the children draw upon a wide range of mental mathematics strategies to perform calculations and can provide logical reasons for their choices. In discussions with a small group of year 7 children, they demonstrate very good levels of mathematical competence; they think flexibly and employ a broad range of problem solving strategies, such as, identifying

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

patterns and working backwards, to solve problems. Throughout the school, the children use competently information and communication technology (ICT) to explore direction and shape. In KS 2, the children are developing well their knowledge of coding, planning and entering commands to create their own projects.

- The children are welcoming, considerate and respectful to one another and to adults. There is a notable maturity in the children's attitude to learning and they exemplify very well the aspiration behind the school's motto 'Learn to love, love to learn'. Throughout the school, the children take turns, share and co-operate effectively when working in groups, taking responsibility for themselves and their contributions to group activities. During the inspection, the behaviour of the children was exemplary.

6. Provision for learning

- There is a consistent and comprehensive approach to planning throughout the school and the curriculum provided is broad, balanced and clearly skills-focused. The recent work to develop the quality of the teacher's medium-term planning has resulted in a sharper focus on individual class targets for literacy and numeracy. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was effective in developing the children's learning; it ranged from good to outstanding with almost two-thirds of the lessons being evaluated as very good. The best practice observed was characterised by highly effective differentiation and plenary sessions which had a clear focus on the learning outcomes for all of the children. Children who require support with aspects of their learning are supported very skilfully by a team of dedicated and very capable classroom assistants. A recent decision by the governors to appoint a part-time teacher to support children with their literacy and numeracy development has enabled most of these children to make very good progress. The teachers mark the children's work regularly and affirmatively and a good start has been made to providing opportunities for the children to self- and peer-assess their work.
- The quality of the provision for literacy, including the use of ICT to promote learning, is very good. This is underpinned by a recently updated policy and a new overview of, and planning for, this area of the curriculum; these documents guide well the development of the children's skills in reading, writing, talking and listening. Reading is afforded a very high priority by the school and is encouraged through the interesting and challenging reading and class novel activities, which are complemented by access to libraries and visiting authors and poets. The children have very good opportunities to write in a variety of relevant contexts, including the World Around Us, and there is a good balance between functional and creative writing. There is very effective provision for developing the children's talking and listening skills, through the numerous opportunities to engage in paired and group discussions, and effective plenary sessions which develop well the children's oracy and their thinking skills.
- The quality of the provision for numeracy, including the use of ICT to promote learning, is very good. A key strength of the numeracy provision is the methodical and progressive manner in which the children acquire and develop their mathematical language; this is well informed by the mathematical language policy. A recent review of the long-term planning for numeracy has resulted in a clear focus on the development of the children's skills. This is reflected in the increasing number of opportunities for the children to use and apply their

mathematical knowledge and understanding to engage in problem solving activities within numeracy lessons and in other areas of the curriculum, particularly the World Around Us. Programmable devices and applications are being used well to develop the children's ability to think and solve problems in a digital environment and present information in a variety of ways.

- The quality of the pastoral care provision is outstanding. Through the highly effective school council, the children undertake leadership roles, which have brought about improvements in lunch provision and play facilities and, in addition, have informed school improvement.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership and management of the school is highly effective. A key strength is the collaborative approach to school improvement where the senior leadership team, learning co-ordinators and governors work together to analyse thoroughly the school's quantitative and qualitative data, identify aspects for development and plan for action to address these areas. Consequently, whilst there has been a period of transition with the recent appointment of the principal and restructuring of roles and responsibilities, it is significant that school improvement has been consistently implemented and is evident in the steadily improving achievements and standards of the children and the quality of their learning experiences.
- The school development planning process¹ is underpinned by wide consultation and provides a comprehensive overview of the work and ambitions of the school. The school's action plans, which are detailed and focused on the outcomes for children, are prepared and monitored by the learning co-ordinators and senior leadership team, who can demonstrate clearly the impact of the improvement work on learning, teaching and the children's attainments.
- The school engages with a wide range of external agencies to meet the learning and pastoral needs of the children. Parents and relatives are encouraged to become involved in the children's learning through the school website, curricular guidance and meetings as well as opportunities to visit the school and experience learning from, and with, 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. A key strength of governance is the regular and purposeful communication between the learning co-ordinators and link governors. Together, they monitor and evaluate the impact of the action planning process on the learning outcomes for 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 KS2 children reported that they felt safe in school and knew what to do if they had any concerns about their well-being.

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

8. Overall effectiveness

St Mary's on the Hill 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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