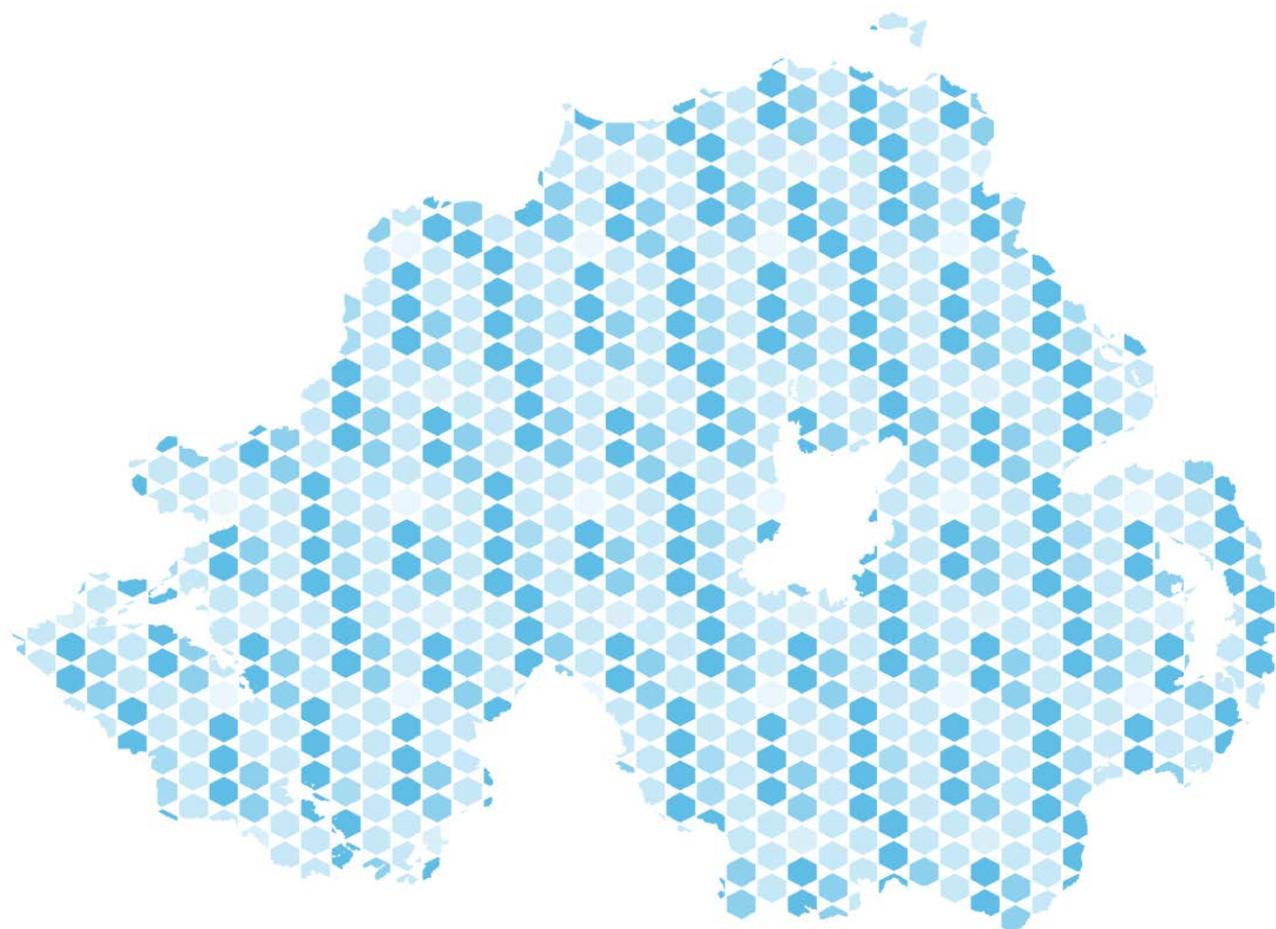


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Columba's Primary School,  
Newbuildings, County  
Londonderry

Report of an Inspection in  
January 2016

*eti*

*The Education and Training Inspectorate -  
Promoting Improvement*

Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education  
Department for Employment and Learning  
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER  
SERVICE  
EXCELLENCE



## 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 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.

Twenty percent of parents and 81% of staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. The responses to the parental questionnaire indicated satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted their appreciation of the welcoming school ethos and hard working staff. Most of the staff completed the questionnaire and their responses were very positive; they emphasised the quality of the working relationships and the strong community spirit within the school. The ETI has reported to the principal and a representative of the board of governors the main issues 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; and
- quality of leadership and management.

## **3. Context**

St Columba's Primary School is a maintained primary school situated in Newbuildings. Most of the children attending the school come from a wide rural and urban catchment area. The enrolment has fluctuated over recent years and the school operates at approximately half of its capacity. The percentage of children entitled to free school meals has decreased in the past four years while the proportion requiring additional help with aspects of their learning has increased. The school has three temporary teachers at present. The school have a small number of reception children who are not of statutory school age, and are accommodated in a composite class along with year 1 children. The school has a well-established shared education link with Newbuildings Primary School which includes shared school outings and a science project which has won a cross community award.

St Columba's Primary School	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Enrolment	68	77	80	67
% School attendance	95.1	97.7	96	N/A
% NI Primary school average	94.9	95.6	N/A	N/A
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	34	23	26	18
No. of children on SEN register	5	7	20	28
% of children on SEN register	7	7	25	27
No. of children with statements of educational need	*	*	*	*
No. of newcomer children	*	*	*	*

**Source:** data as held by the school.

\* fewer than 5

N/A not available

#### 4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
<b>Achievements and standards</b>	Very good
<b>Provision for learning</b>	Good
<b>Leadership and management</b>	Good

#### 5. Achievements and standards

- The children engage in their learning with enthusiasm and enjoyment. They develop well their independence and from foundation stage are able to access and use resources appropriately. The children are reflective learners and are beginning to evaluate their learning; they demonstrate confidence in asking questions and communicating about their work. They work well collaboratively in pairs and small groups, and are able to transfer their skills to a range of contexts. The children demonstrate good information and communication technology (ICT) skills through classroom displays and individual work.
- The school's performance data shows that almost all of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make progress in English and mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation.
- From the foundation stage, the children develop well their communication and literacy skills. Across the key-stages, the children have very good listening skills and express themselves confidently in varied and meaningful learning contexts. The children's writing skills improve year on year and they benefit from writing in a variety of forms. By year 7, the children read with fluency, expression and understanding and can talk enthusiastically about their reading.

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

- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning make very good progress in meeting the targets outlined in their individual education plans. The children work confidently alongside their peers and are integrated well into all aspects of school life.
- The children in the reception provision are well-settled, have good levels of concentration and enjoy the whole-class story sessions. They play collaboratively in a wide range of activities and co-operate well with their peers and with staff.

## **6. Provision for learning**

- The quality of the lessons observed ranged from good to outstanding; the majority of the teaching was very good or outstanding. In the most effective lessons, the activities and resources were well-chosen to meet the needs of the children and ICT was used to stimulate their interest and consolidate learning. The teachers' short- and medium-term planning is effective with comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of learning to inform future planning despite the complex demands of composite classes with children from two key stages (KS). In KS2, there are a lack of planned opportunities for paired, group and active learning. In the most effective practice, the teachers mark the children's work with supportive comments and indicate clearly how the children can improve further their work.
- The quality of the provision for the reception children is good. The children have extensive opportunities for extended play with a wide and appropriate range of equipment and materials; however, there are limited opportunities for socialisation due to the small number of reception-aged children in the school. The length of the school day for the children is very long and needs to be reviewed by the principal and board of governors.
- The children identified as having additional educational needs are supported well by both classroom staff and the recently introduced individual lessons for both literacy and numeracy. The individual education plans prioritise achievable targets and inform appropriately classroom practice. The progress of the children is tracked and evaluated regularly.
- There is a comprehensive programme for the development of literacy skills throughout the school; however, the school has identified appropriately the need to review the strategic development of the children's reading, writing and oracy skills to ensure that all aspects of literacy are taught in a coherent, systematic way, using a range of strategies. Key strengths of the provision include: the well-planned play-based learning which provides the children with valuable opportunities to use and develop their language and early writing skills; the enjoyment of reading across the school; and, the effectively differentiated literacy activities. The school have identified appropriately the need for further opportunities for extended writing in the KS2 literacy programme.

- The quality of pastoral care is very good. There is an inclusive ethos which permeates all aspects of the school where all the children are valued. The staff are highly committed to the welfare of the children and promote high standards in behaviour and work. The pastoral support provided by the school is appropriately responsive to the needs of individual children. During meetings with the inspectors, the children were articulate and showed great pride in their school. They spoke about the subjects they enjoy and the progress they make in their learning. The children reported that they have recently introduced opportunities to make decisions about their school through, for example, the school council. They spoke with enthusiasm about their shared activities with another school in the area.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity thereby encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles through the range of physical activities throughout the school week.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The leadership team have developed a clear, strategic vision for the school that has been shared and agreed with staff, parents and governors. The school development plan<sup>2</sup> and associated action plans focus on improving further the quality of the children's learning experiences with appropriate strategies to involve fully staff in their implementation; the plans are progressing at an appropriate pace. The leadership team have identified the need to develop further the culture of self-evaluation within the school by monitoring and evaluating the impact of the action plans on learning and teaching. The school can demonstrate that recent changes in the use of qualitative and quantitative data have led to improvements in the learning experiences for the children. There is a need for the school leadership to review the curricular roles and responsibilities to promote more distributive leadership throughout the school.
- The school has good links and partnerships with the parents and the wider community and is developing additional links through workshops on paired reading, internet safety and fitness classes. A particular strength is the excellent partnership work with other schools, including Newbuildings Primary School, which supports very effectively the children's learning, while the teachers benefit from the sharing of expertise and professional development opportunities with a range of other neighbouring schools.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. There are aspects of governance to review, namely:
  - the distribution of curriculum roles and responsibilities; and
  - the provision for the reception aged children, including the length of the school day.

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

- 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 year 6 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 Columba's Primary 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 areas for improvement are:

- for the governors and leadership team to review and agree the distribution of the curriculum roles and responsibilities; and
- for the governors to review the provision for the reception-aged children.

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