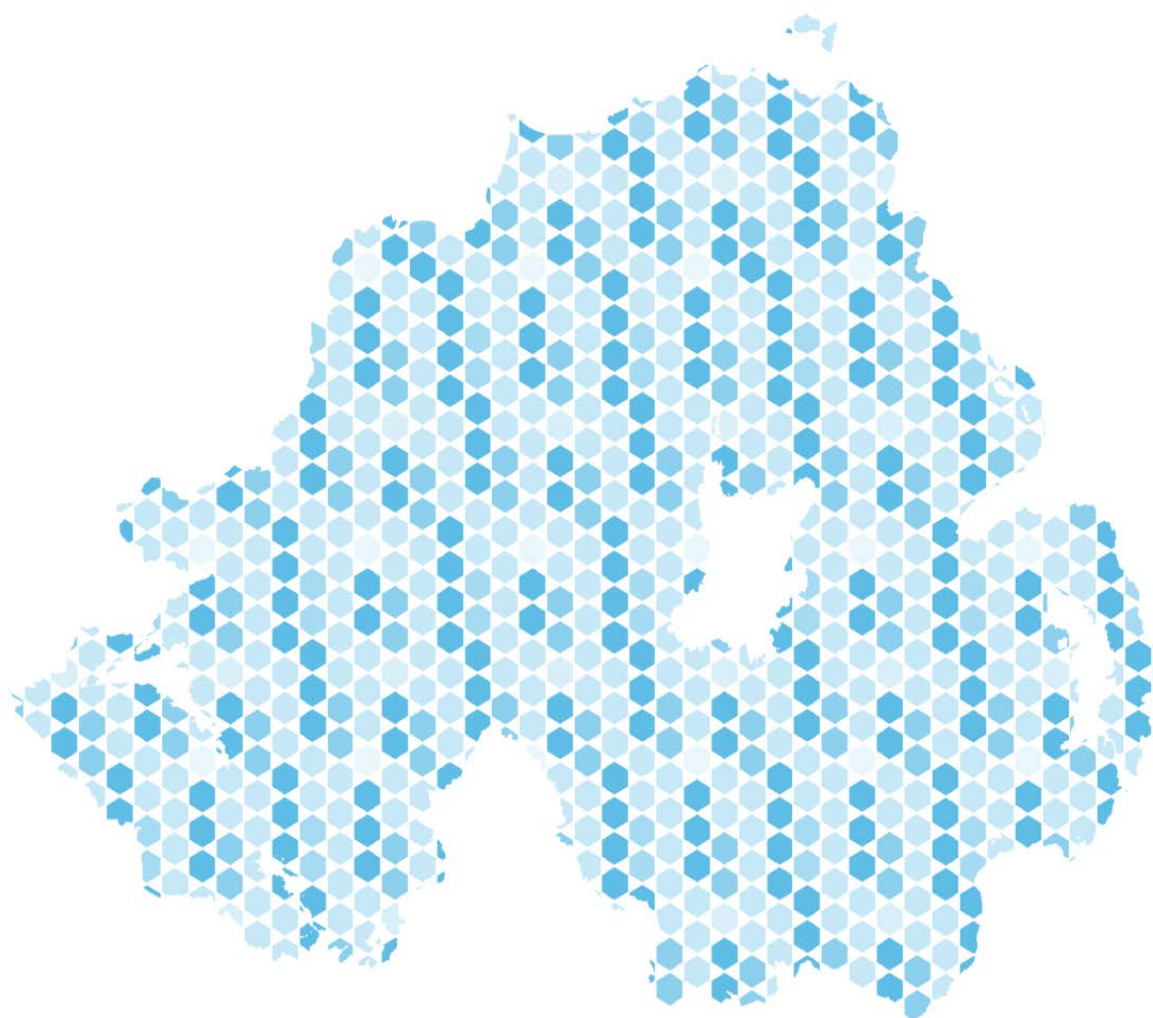


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St Colmcille's Primary School,
Ballymena

Report of an Inspection
in January 2013



Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



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Inspection methods and evidence base

The inspection evaluations are based on evidence gained from lesson observations, from scrutiny of the children's completed written work and from a range of documentation including the school's internal performance data. In addition, the inspection team held discussions with groups of the children, with teaching and non-teaching staff and with representatives from the Board of Governors.

The views of the parents, teaching and non-teaching staff were sought through a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. The reporting inspector discussed any issues raised through the questionnaires with the principal and the governors. A summary of the outcomes from the questionnaires is included in section 6 of the report.

Quantitative terms

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

1. School context

St Colmcille's Primary School opened in 2007 and is situated on the Cullybackey Road in Ballymena, County Antrim. The enrolment has fluctuated slightly over the past five years and stands presently at 316; 11% of the children are newcomers. At the time of the inspection, 13% of the children were entitled to free school meals. Approximately 13% of the children were identified as requiring support with aspects of their learning.

2. Focus of the inspection and overall finding

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy, in particular, how the school is addressing low attainment and under-achievement where applicable;
- the quality of provision in the school; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

In addition, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning, and the school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection, were evaluated.

OVERALL FINDING OF THE INSPECTION

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

Summary of key findings

Achievements and standards	Very Good
Quality of Provision	Very Good
Leadership and management	Outstanding

KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

3. Achievements and Standards

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

- The children are well motivated, articulate and respond positively to the high expectations set by all of the staff, as displayed in the children's high levels of engagement in their learning. They have appropriate levels of independence in their learning, enjoy paired and group work, listen respectfully, value the contribution made by their peers and express their own views with increasing confidence. The children's behaviour is exemplary.

- An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data over the past four years shows that the school's performance in English and mathematics has remained well above the Northern Ireland (NI) average. During the same four year period, when compared with schools in the same free school meals category, English is in line with or above the average. The school's performance in mathematics is in line with or above the average in three of the last four years.
- The children attain very good standards in writing. A notable feature of the school's writing culture is the range of opportunities provided for the children to write independently. Their achievements are displayed and celebrated throughout the school. By KS 2 the children write with increasing confidence for a range of audiences and purposes. The school places strong emphasis on the children's development as competent readers. In the best practice, the teachers prioritise the development of the children's oral skills across the curriculum and the children attain very good standards in talking and listening. In mathematics, the children work with enthusiasm and engage collaboratively with their peers to complete challenging, real-life investigative activities. During discussions with the children, they demonstrated very good knowledge and understanding of important ideas and concepts across all areas of the mathematics curriculum. They are able to complete mental calculations quickly, display flexibility in their thinking and are able to explain their strategies confidently.
- The staff monitor the children's learning rigorously and can demonstrate clearly that the children who have been identified with special educational needs make very good progress in their learning.
- Across all key stages the children develop very good ICT skills, using a range of resources to support their learning. By the end of KS 2, the children attain very good standards in ICT Accreditation which are well above the NI average.

4. Provision for Learning

The quality of the provision for learning is very good.

- The quality of the teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding; a majority of the teaching was very good or outstanding. In the most effective practice, the teachers: build well on the children's previous learning; match the learning to the needs of each child; give the children opportunities to set their own targets for their learning; and, plan innovative and creative learning activities that promote connections across the curriculum. In assessing the children's work, the teachers' comments are consistently supportive and often give the children very clear guidance on how it can be improved.
- Literacy and numeracy are developed across the curriculum effectively and the teaching of both is of a very good standard. The teachers exploit opportunities to develop further the children's oral skills across the curriculum, for example, they use precise terms to explain their mathematical processes and articulate their reasoning very clearly. The school gives a high priority to the development of numeracy. The children have a broad programme which covers all the important aspects of numeracy. In the best practice the teachers set a high level of challenge in numeracy activities and integrate the learning very creatively across other areas of learning, developing very effectively the children's thinking skill and personal capabilities.

- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is outstanding. The holistic development of each child is central to the ethos and work of the school and there is a clear focus on building their confidence, self-esteem and their ability to manage their own learning. The extensive range of extra-curricular and other enrichment activities provided enhances well the children's learning experiences and their personal and social development. The children are afforded very good opportunities to contribute to the decision-making process and to develop as active citizens.
- The school identifies well, and at an early stage, the children who require additional support with their learning. The children benefit significantly from the intervention programmes that are in place and the excellent links established with external support agencies and with the parents. The children are involved appropriately in setting clear and achievable targets and in monitoring their own progress in meeting them. A particular strength is the development of the target books which chart and praise the children's short-term progress. The learning support assistants have been trained to high levels and work very effectively with individual children to support their learning and to build their confidence. Almost all of the children involved in the programmes make significant progress.
- The school gives very good attention to healthy eating and physical activity through, for example, the promotion of healthy breaks and the healthy eating week.

5. Leadership and Management

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding.

- The leadership provides a clear vision for the school with a focus on effecting high quality learning and teaching. The coordinators are highly effective and have identified appropriate areas for development which are integrated well in the school development plan. The associated action plans contribute effectively to the whole-school aim of raising standards further for the children. There is a range of effective procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of the provision, including internal moderation based on book trawls and the rigorous analysis of performance data available for each child. The school's development planning process is underpinned by a culture of rigorous self-evaluation at all levels in order to bring about improvement. The school development plan has been agreed, and contributed to at all levels and is supported by a well-structured staff development programme to build capacity throughout the school.
- The school has highly effective arrangements in place for communicating with the parents on their child's progress and informing them of curricular developments to help them support their child's learning. The school benefits from the additional support provided by the active Parent Teacher Association.
- The governors have been involved strategically in the design of the school development plan and in supporting the staff in its implementation. In particular, they have a clear understanding of the internal performance data held by the school and play a critical role in the subsequent setting of targets to improve further the children's achievements.

- 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 children, they indicated that they feel happy in school and that they know who to speak to if they have any concerns about their well-being.

CONCLUSION

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

6. Summary of questionnaire responses

PARENTAL QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Issued to the school (Based on 09/10 Enrolment)	100
Number of Questionnaires Returned	61
Percentage of Returns	61%
Number of Comments	41

Almost all of the responses from the parental questionnaires indicated a high level of satisfaction with the provision in the school. In particular, the parents commented on the many opportunities available for their children to develop both academically and socially; the support received by the children with special educational needs; the way in which all members of staff value the children and the excellent communication between school and home.

In discussions with the governors they praised the work of the Principal and Vice-principal and expressed their appreciation of the commitment of the whole staff in their continuing effort to raise further the standards attained by all the children. They highlighted the positive working relationships throughout the school and the high reputation of the school within the community.

TEACHERS QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Returned	14
Number of Comments	13

SUPPORT STAFF QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Returned	11
Number of Comments	*

* Denotes fewer than 5

In their questionnaire responses, all of the staff indicated that they enjoy working in the school and feel valued by the leadership team. In particular, they commented on the opportunities provided for their professional development and their role in helping the children realise the school's mission; 'be the best they can be'.

The inspectors met with a group of the year 6 children; the children talked very positively about the subjects and enrichment activities they enjoy, the support and encouragement provided by the staff and the benefits gained from the work of the school and eco councils.

BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School:** St Colmcille's Primary School iii. **Date of Inspection:** W/B 07/01/2013
 ii. **School Reference Number:** 303-6666 iv. **Nature of Inspection:** Focused

B.

School Year	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Year 1 Intake	40	48	48	29	62
Enrolments					
Primary	321	313	316	300	316
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Special Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Irish Medium Unit	0	0	0	0	0

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):

96.5%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit	Irish Medium Unit
------------------------	-----------------	-----------------	----------------------

- D. i. Number of Teachers
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 13 0 0 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 24.3 NI PTR: 20.4
- iii. Average Class Size: 26
- iv. Class Size (Range): 22 to 31
- v. Ancillary Support:
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- | | |
|---|------|
| i. Clerical support: | 53.5 |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support: | 60 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 144 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 1.9%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 13.4%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 12.9%
- x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2008/09 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics:
- | | |
|--------------------|-------|
| English | 88.5% |
| Mathematics | 94.2% |

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