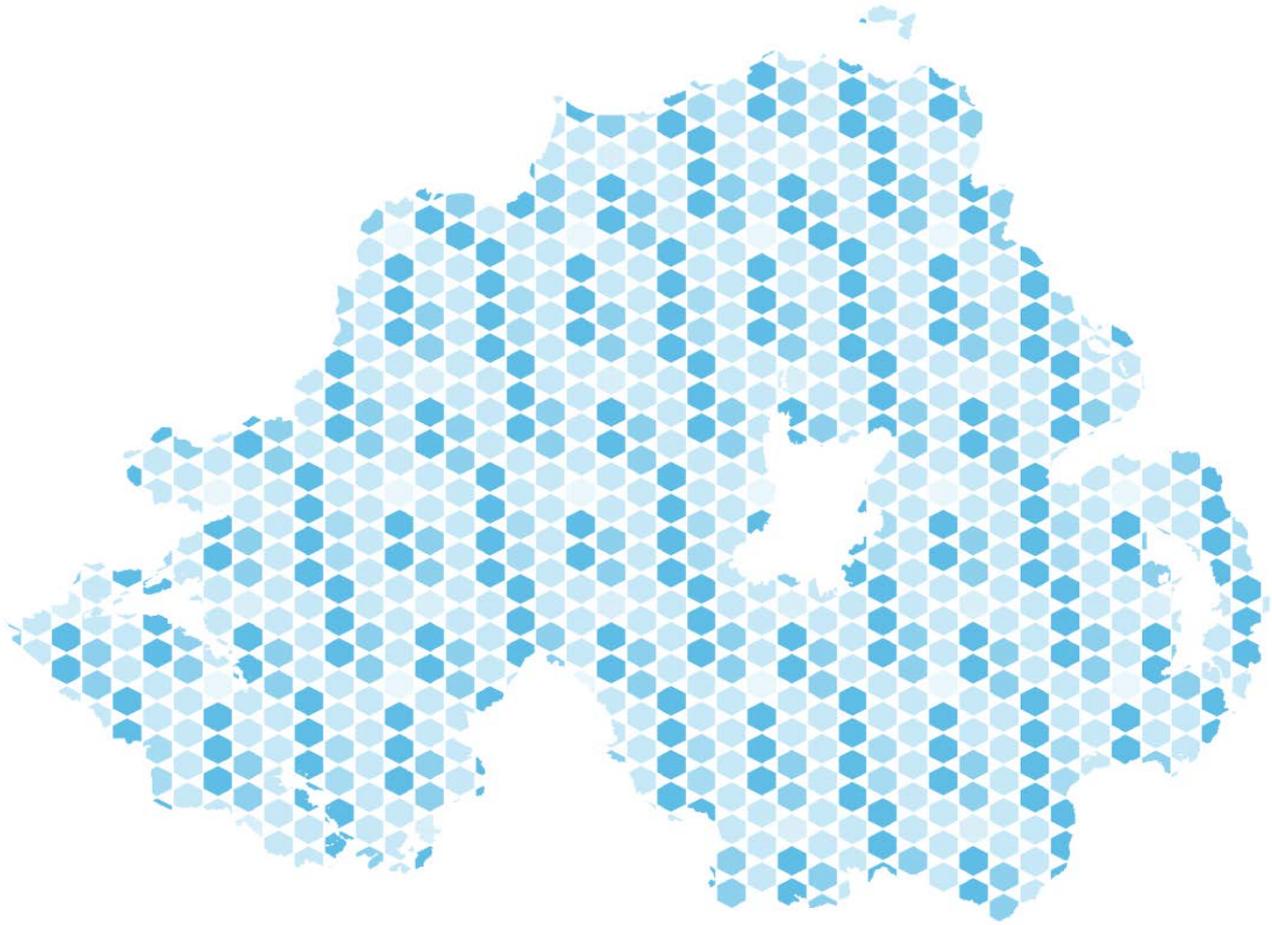


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Maghera Primary School,  
County Londonderry

Report of an Inspection in  
April 2016



The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement

**Providing Inspection Services for:**

Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
Department for Communities



## 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.

# Contents

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
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	5
8. Overall effectiveness	6
Appendix	

## **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 confidential questionnaires.

Twenty-three percent of parents and eighty-one percent of staff responded to the confidential questionnaires. The responses from the confidential parental questionnaire indicated very high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted their appreciation of the caring ethos, the approachable and helpful staff and the range of extra-curricular activities provided for the children. The very positive responses from the staff highlighted appreciation of working within a strong school community with open lines of communication and staff commitment to a child-centred approach to learning and teaching. The ETI has reported the outcome of the confidential questionnaires to the principal and a representative of the board of governors. No significant issues were raised.

## **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**

Maghera Primary School is a controlled primary school situated in the centre of the town of Maghera. The school reports that the catchment area has widened in recent years with children coming from nearby residential areas, surrounding rural townlands and the neighbouring villages of Tobermore, Culnady, Kilrea and Upperlands. The enrolment has remained relatively constant over the past 4 years. The percentage of children entitled to free school meals has also remained relatively steady with an average of 30% over the previous 4 years. There is an independent playgroup within the grounds of the primary school. The school employs a part-time teacher for children requiring additional support with their learning and a part-time teacher for languages.

Maghera Primary School	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Enrolment	95	104	100	105
% School attendance	95.8	96.7	96.7	95.2
% NI Primary school average	94.9	95.6	95.4	N/A
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	32.6	30.8	26	30.4
No. of children on SEN register	19	14	16	10
% of children on SEN register	20	13	16	10
No. of children with statements of educational need	*	*	*	0
No. of newcomer children	*	*	*	*

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

\* fewer than 5

N/A not available

#### 4. Overall findings of the inspection

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
<b>Achievements and standards</b>	Very good
<b>Provision for learning</b>	Very good
<b>Leadership and management</b>	Very good

#### 5. Achievements and standards

- The children throughout the school are very happy, friendly and welcoming. They demonstrate high levels of enthusiasm and engagement with their learning. They are very caring of each other, show respect to adults and engage easily with visitors. They participate effectively in group and paired work and display high levels of independence. The children's natural curiosity and interest in their learning regularly leads them to ask interesting and well constructed questions of the adults and their peers. The children's behaviour, both in school and during a visit to a local post-primary school, was exemplary.
- The school's internal performance data and the evidence from the children's written work and oral responses indicate that most of the children, including the children who require additional support with their learning, are achieving very good standards in literacy and numeracy.
- From an early age, the children provide well-articulated extended responses in class discussions and use a wide range of appropriate vocabulary to express their ideas and opinions. Throughout the school, the children develop systematically a range of effective reading strategies; by year 7, the most able children are enthusiastic, expressive, fluent readers who talk confidently about their reading preferences and favourite authors. The school's recent focus on creative writing, including attention to the basics of handwriting, punctuation and grammar, has raised significantly the standard of the children's writing across the curriculum. The children write for a range of real audiences; they are able to draft and peer or self-edit creative, imaginative and often humorous, well presented extended pieces of writing.

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

- The children in year 1 to year 7 participate in weekly French lessons and are able to recognise and write key words and phrases and converse with their French teacher and their peers. The skills of learning a second language are transferred into other learning activities across the curriculum, for example, sight-reading, word recognition, group leadership responsibilities, collaboration and conversational skills.
- The children achieve very good standards in information and communication technology. They use technology with increasing confidence and aptitude to engage actively with their learning by managing information and presenting in a range of digital formats. The senior children have developed a range of computer games for the younger children and are responsible for the use of technology in assembly.

## **6. Provision for learning**

- All of the teaching observed was good or better with the majority being very good or better. The high quality of learning and teaching is underpinned by the positive and respectful working relationships throughout the school which contribute significantly to an effective learning environment. In the most effective practice, in a majority of lessons, the teachers are skilled in using open-ended questioning to encourage the children to extend their thinking and use sensitively their mistakes as further learning opportunities. The lessons observed were well-paced and differentiated to meet the needs of the composite classes and the range of ability within each class. The teachers' marking for improvement contributes significantly to the continuous progress in standards including the work of those children achieving at the highest level. The teachers and children are very well supported by the skilled team of classroom assistants who contribute to the learning and teaching throughout the school.
- In the foundation stage, the play-based learning encourages independence, resourcefulness, perseverance and problem solving. The purposeful and well planned activities and resources reinforce core curriculum skills including literacy, numeracy and the natural world, and take account of the children's interests encouraging them to explore new ideas. The children work collaboratively in pairs or small groups, routines are well established and the adult interaction is of a high quality.
- The school has long-term, whole school planning in place for the core curriculum areas which ensures progression and continuity. The teachers' medium-term planning and thematic planning guides effectively the work of the composite classes and ensures a cross-curricular approach to learning and teaching. In the most effective practice, the teachers' evaluations indicate the progress of specific children and the suitability of the teaching approaches and resources which informs future learning and teaching; the school recognises the need to disseminate this good practice.

- The children's reading skills are developed through a systematic and carefully planned approach using commercial reading schemes and additional novels. The school has purchased recently an accelerated reading programme which has further encouraged and challenged the children to read a greater range of texts. Regular visits to the local town library, the well-stocked central library in the school and the class libraries provide the children with a wide range of reading material and the opportunity to take on the role of librarian. The phonics programme is well-embedded throughout the school and there is evidence in the children's written work and in observed lessons that they are able to apply their skills when attempting to read or spell unfamiliar words.
- The comprehensive, whole school mathematics programme provides balance and clear progression throughout the school. The teachers have developed challenging tasks with familiar local references which help the children to make connections between their learning and everyday life. In the foundation stage and key stage (KS) 1, the children use their emerging understanding of mathematical concepts in planned opportunities for play and in other areas of the curriculum. In KS2, the children use a wide range of mathematical language with understanding and use their mathematics skills to solve problems working competently in small groups and pairs. The teachers provide opportunities for the children in year 6 and year 7 to develop their financial capabilities through their participation in long-term mini-enterprise activities. Robust tracking and monitoring of progress has led to staff implementing appropriate programmes and in-class interventions to address identified areas of need. The school has begun the process of monitoring the programmes to inform future planning.
- A particular feature of the school is the attention given to the children's appreciation of the natural world and science and technology skills. An extensive eco-area has been developed which is used to enhance learning during school hours and in the after-school eco and gardening clubs. The school has a very effective partnership with a local post-primary school; the year 7 primary school children visit regularly the science department to work in partnership with the year 8 and year 9 pupils on a variety of curriculum areas including the investigation of living organisms and the construction of bird boxes. This programme enhances the children's science and technology skills; communication and social skills; collaborative learning; diversity awareness; and positive dispositions to learning.
- There is highly effective communication between teachers, the learning support teacher, and the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and classroom assistants creating a collaborative approach to supporting the children with special educational needs. Early identification and the use of appropriate intervention strategies underpin the proactive approach used by the staff. Monitoring of planning, in class support and withdrawal support is undertaken regularly to ensure consistency of approach across the school. The school identified the need to revise their individual education plans and are reviewing the recently introduced plans in order to refine further the targets and strategies to reflect more accurately the progress being made by the children on the special educational needs register. The school needs to determine staff competencies and the needs of the children with special educational needs within the school in order to inform future training needs of all staff.

- The pastoral care in the school is outstanding. A welcoming, supportive learning environment permeates the school with the children and adults treating each other with care and respect. Opportunities for the children to take on a broad range of leadership roles within class and in assembly, the school and eco-council, the buddy system, and the house system develops further the children's self-confidence and self-esteem. There are extensive opportunities to engage in physical, musical and curriculum based extra-curricular activities after school and to avail of the breakfast club before school.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity thereby encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The leadership and management of the school are highly effective; there is a vision for continued improvement with a clear and carefully considered direction for future development of the school. All of the staff work very effectively as a team with a clear focus on improving further the children's learning experiences and the standards they attain. The school improvement process is linked to an effective development plan<sup>2</sup> (SDP) that has involved consultation with children, parents and governors. The current action plans identify appropriate priorities that focus on learning and teaching and the school has recognised the need to formalise further the approaches to monitoring and evaluation through a review of the roles and responsibilities of the co-ordinators.
- The quality of engagement with parents and the local community is a key strength of the school. The new school website provides a comprehensive range of information on the life and work of the school and includes an opportunity for the children to embed their learning through games and activities. The active parent-teacher association provides significant additional funds for the school which have been used to purchase additional resources for the eco-garden, sports, library facilities and outdoor play. Regular workshop sessions provide information for parents in supporting their children's learning included writing, numeracy, homework, phonics and spelling. The school has close links with the independent playgroup sited on the school grounds and has extensive links with a range of post-primary schools.
- 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 well informed about all aspects of school life, including the standards achieved by the children and the school improvement process. The school's finances are managed effectively and careful consideration is given to the long-term future of the school. The board of governors are involved actively with the children's learning through the 'Adopt a Governor' programme, whereby each class is partnered with a governor; during the inspection a governor was interviewed by the children on the roles and responsibilities of the school governing body and local business interests.

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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 broadly reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. In discussion with the inspectors, the children in year 6 spoke enthusiastically about all aspects of their school. They reported that they felt safe and valued in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their well-being.

## **8. Overall effectiveness**

Maghera 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.

**Health and Safety / Accommodation**

1. The employing authority, governors and leadership team need to review the security access to an external door at the side of the school.

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