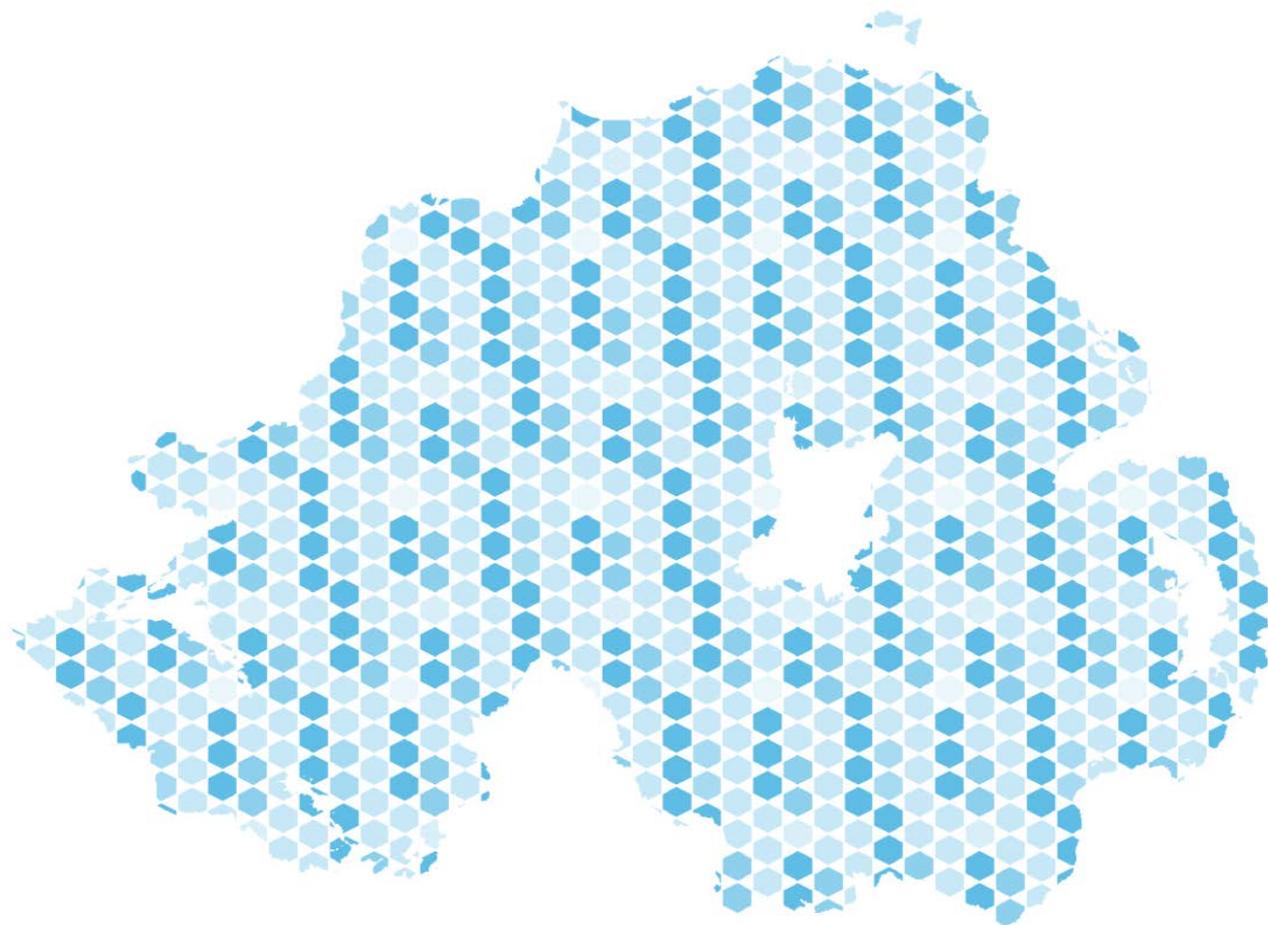


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Castledawson Primary School,  
Magherafelt, 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.

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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 confidential questionnaires.

Ten percent of parents and almost all of staff responded to the questionnaires. The responses to the parental questionnaire indicated high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted their appreciation of the leadership of the principal, the caring staff and the wide range of experiences available to the children, including the shared education work with the local, maintained primary school. The responses to the staff questionnaires were wholly positive; they emphasised the inclusion of staff in the self-evaluation processes and teamwork at all levels. The ETI has reported to the principal and a representative of the board of governors the positive findings and the small number of concerns emerging from the 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;
- the quality of provision for learning in the school; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

## **3. Context**

Castledawson Primary School is a controlled primary school situated in Castledawson. Almost all of the children attending the school come from the wider Castledawson community. There is a long established shared education link with the local maintained primary school.

<b>Castledawson Primary School</b>	<b>2012-13</b>	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2015-16</b>
Enrolment	96	95	88	91
% Attendance	96.1	96.6	96.4	95
% Attendance for those children on the SEN Register	96.1	95.8	95.4	94
Percentage of pupils entitled to Free School Meals	32.3	32.6	25	29
% of children on SEN register	25	24	27	43
No. of children with statements of educational needs	*	*	*	*
No. of newcomers	*	*	*	*

**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**

- Across the school, the children demonstrate high levels of engagement and enjoyment in their learning. Most of the children are courteous and respectful to one another and to adults, including visitors to the school; their behaviour is very good. As they progress through the school, the children develop well their personal and interpersonal skills. They become more confident, self-assured and take on roles and responsibilities with maturity.
- The school's internal performance data shows that all of the children make progress in English and, in mathematics, almost all of the children are in line with their ability or above expectation.
- In the foundation stage and key stage (KS) 1, the children develop well their talking and listening skills across the curriculum and, in particular, through play-based learning. The children are confident to have a go in written activities producing original pieces of writing and making use of their extending vocabulary. By the end of KS2, almost all of the children can express their ideas and opinions, providing well reasoned evidence and participating maturely in pairs, small groups and whole class discussions. During the inspection, a group of the year 7 children read with fluency and engaged meaningfully in discussions about their favourite books and authors.

- Across the key stages, the children show a high level of engagement and enthusiasm during practical mathematical activities; they can explain their learning and record accurately their findings. By year 7, the children are secure in their knowledge of key mathematical concepts and are confident and flexible in their thinking across all the areas of mathematics. They use a range of mathematical language and can apply their understanding in real and relevant contexts.
- Almost all of the children on the special educational needs register are making good progress and achieving the targets set out for them on their individual education plans. They engage very well with the range of interventions in place to support their learning and are included fully in all aspects of the life and work of the school.
- The children are confident and at ease in their use of information and communication technology (ICT). By the end of year 7, they demonstrate very good skills in researching, exhibiting and evaluating their own and their peers' work.

## **6. Provision for learning**

- All of the lessons observed during the inspection were effective in extending the children's knowledge and understanding, and in developing their skills. Almost two-thirds of the lessons observed were very good or better. In the best practice, in a majority of the lessons, the teachers set the learning activities in contexts which are meaningful to the children and the resources are used effectively to support the children's understanding. They use effective questioning to extend the children's learning and to develop their thinking. The teachers' short- and medium-term planning guides well the learning, ensuring that differentiation is clear and that connections are made across the curriculum. The planning is well informed by the teachers' evaluations which are focused on the children's learning. The teachers mark the children's work regularly and provide clear written advice to the children on how to improve their work.
- The planning for literacy guides well the children's progression and development of skills in reading, writing, talking and listening. The writing programme is incorporated effectively across other areas of the curriculum. As a result, the children have very good opportunities to extend their writing in a range of forms across the curriculum. The children have very good opportunities to develop their talking and listening skills through well-planned group activities including debates and role-playing'.
- The long-term planning for numeracy outlines clearly the progression in the knowledge and skills across each year group and provides appropriate guidance for the teachers. The teachers make effective use of a range of practical materials, games and strategies to stimulate the children's mathematical curiosity and to reinforce their mathematical thinking. In numeracy lessons observed, the work was differentiated appropriately with engaging introductions to lessons which consolidated mental mathematics skills. The children have very good opportunities to use mathematics in appropriate contexts across the curriculum.

- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are supported by effective withdrawal sessions for literacy and numeracy. In class, the teachers plan appropriately differentiated lessons to support and challenge effectively the children in their learning. The classroom assistants make a very good contribution to the children's learning in class and through the range of intervention programmes provided for the children. The staff have undertaken extensive professional development in various aspects of special educational needs provision; it will be important that this training, including the use of diagnostic assessment, be disseminated and embedded across the school to help the staff meet more fully the specific needs of all the children.
- The provision for pastoral care is good. There is a caring, welcoming and inclusive ethos evident throughout the school. The children's successes in all areas of school life are valued and celebrated and there are a range of extra-curricular sporting and music activities that develop their confidence and social skills. The children have very good opportunities to express their views, including through the well-established school- and eco-councils, which provide the children with opportunities to play an important role in effecting improvements in, for example, the outdoor play area. The school has identified the need to develop a more holistic and consistent approach to behaviour management, in particular, for the children with social emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, by encouraging the children to bring healthy snacks and participate in a wide range of sports, thereby encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The senior leaders work effectively as a team and articulate a clear vision for sustained improvement which places the learning, development and well-being of all of the children at the centre of the school's work.
- The school development planning<sup>1</sup> and action planning processes are informed by rigorous analysis of performance data and by extensive consultation with the children, parents, staff and governors. The school development plan and associated action plans identify appropriate priorities for improvement in order to raise further the outcomes for the children. The senior leaders and co-ordinators use effectively the robust monitoring and evaluation processes to track the children's progress and learning experiences. The impact of the improvement work is evident in the quality of the provision and in the rising standards attained by the children.
- The school has effective links with the parents who are well informed about their children's progress and the life and work of the school through, for example, school newsletters and the informative school website. The school has developed effective links with the local pre-school providers and the relevant post-primary schools to ensure effective transitions for the children. The children and staff are working currently with the local maintained school on a range of joint cross-curricular projects.

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<sup>1</sup> The school development plan meets the requirements of the School Development Planning Regulations (2010) NI.

- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors carry out their roles supportively and understand well the challenges and opportunities faced by the school. In order to develop further their knowledge of the curriculum and standards, it is appropriate that governors embed the work of the recently established sub-committees.
- 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 and 7 reported that they feel 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**

Castledawson 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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