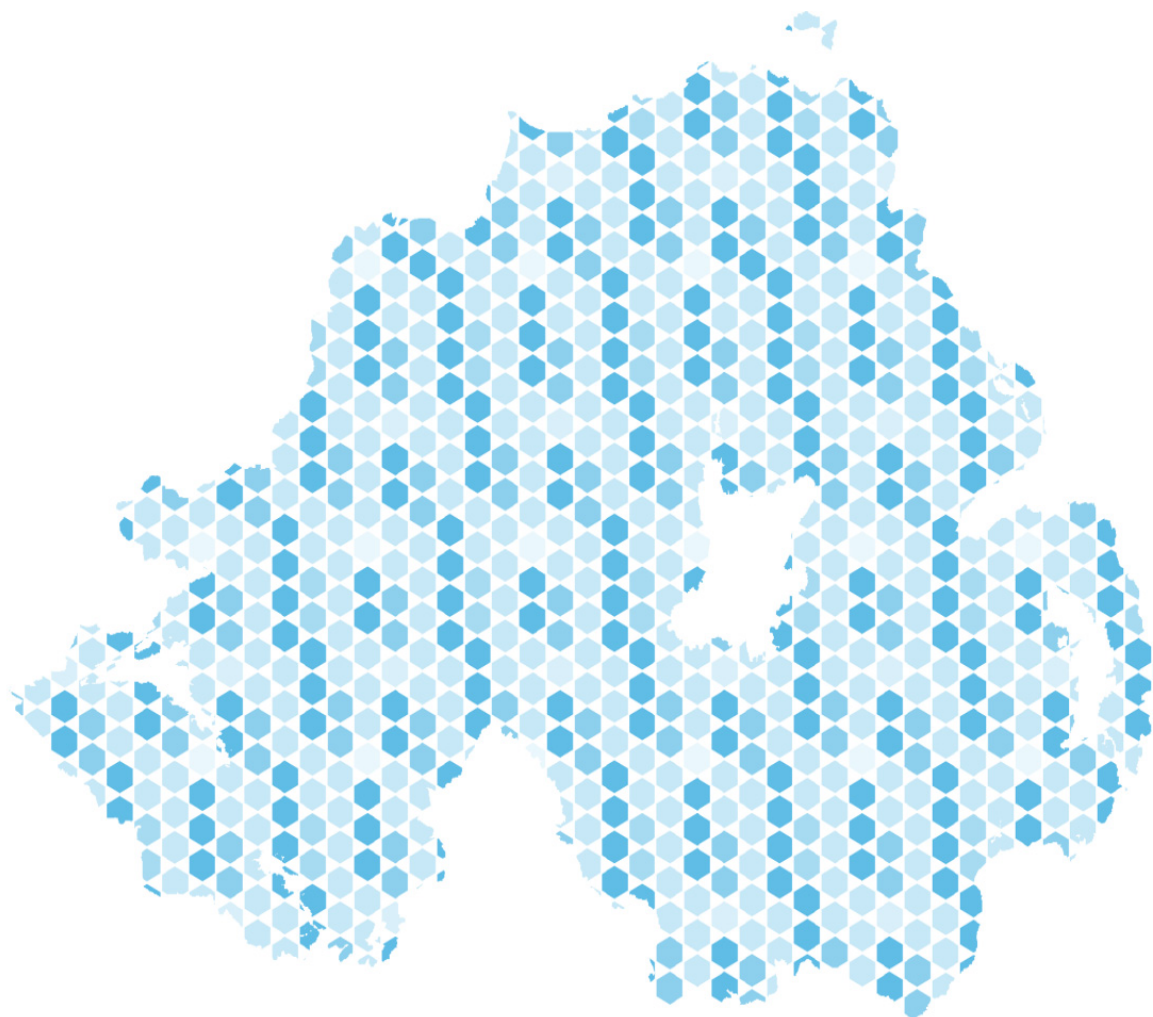


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Ashlea Primary School and
Nursery Unit, Londonderry

Report of an Inspection
in November 2010

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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

BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Ashlea Primary Londonderry** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 22/11/10**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 201-6124** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Year 1 Intake	7	5	11	2	4
Enrolments					
Primary	65	64	70	59	51
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	26	26	26	26	26
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): 93.43 **NI Avg Att: 94.9%**
- | Primary & Reception | Nursery Unit | Special Unit | Irish Medium Unit |
|---------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
|---------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
- D. i. Number of Teachers
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 3.6 1
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 14.1 NI PTR: 20.7
- iii. Average Class Size: 17
- iv. Class Size (Range): 12 to 20
- v. Ancillary Support:
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- | | |
|---|------|
| i. Clerical support: | 15 |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support: | 20 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 67.5 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 1.96
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 47%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 50%
- x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2009/10
 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics: **English** 57.14 **Mathematics** 74.13

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Ashlea Primary School is situated in Tullyally on the outskirts of Londonderry. The enrolment has declined over the past five years and currently stands at 51. Most of the children come from the immediate surrounding area. Approximately 50% of the children are entitled to free school meals and 47% are identified as requiring additional support for aspects of their learning.

The school has a nursery which is situated in purpose-built accommodation within the school grounds. It offers 26 full-time places, all of which are filled; currently, 12 of the children attending are in their penultimate pre-school year.

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy;
- the quality of provision for learning; 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.

1.3 THE VIEWS OF THE PARENTS, TEACHERS, GOVERNORS, SUPPORT STAFF AND CHILDREN

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents and the staff to complete a confidential questionnaire, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors), and a group of the children from year 6 and year 7. Forty-three questionnaires were issued to parents; 23% of these were returned to Inspection Services Branch with two containing additional written comments. The responses were all very positive and indicated high levels of satisfaction with the provision in the school. In particular, the parents highlighted the caring learning environment and the high regard the local community holds for the school. All five teachers and six of the support staff completed the confidential online questionnaire with one member of the support staff providing an additional written comment. All their responses were highly affirmative of the work of the school.

In the nursery, 50% of the parents responded to the questionnaires and five included additional written comments. The responses indicated that the parents regarded the nursery highly; they valued the work of the committed staff in developing the children's confidence and social skills.

The governors expressed appreciation for the hard work and commitment of the Principal and all the staff. They highlighted the family ethos and the links with the local community. The children in year 6 and year 7 talked enthusiastically about the many aspects of school life they enjoyed. They said that they felt safe in school and knew what to do if they have any worries or concerns.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) reported to the Principal and the governors the main messages emerging from the questionnaires and discussions.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is very good. All the staff are committed to the care and welfare of the children. The school promotes a bright and stimulating learning environment with many examples of the children's art and topic work on display. The children's achievements are celebrated well through a reward system, and they contribute with a clear sense of confidence to assemblies which promote well their personal and social development. There are many opportunities for the children to contribute positively to the life of the school. The key stage (KS) 1 children are involved actively in activities relating to matters of environmental interest as "eco-monitors" and the older children read regularly to their younger peers as part of a reading initiative. The children participate enthusiastically in the wide range of activities provided through the Extended Schools programme and, as a result, develop useful personal attributes, for example their team-working skills.

The nursery has a welcoming atmosphere and the working relationships at all levels are excellent. There are appropriate policies and procedures in place which promote the children's very good behaviour.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school and nursery have satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. The arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education (DE); the school has identified the need to update aspects of the training in safeguarding.

1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school and the nursery give very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, for example, through the involvement of a visiting nutritionist to promote health messages, the food tasting sessions, the nursery's break routine and the outdoor physical play activities, all of which promote well the children's understanding of healthy lifestyles.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The Principal, school staff and governors are committed to, and have been successful in, forging strong links with the parents and the local community, and, for example, actively promote the local community's use of the school premises. There are very good arrangements for communication with the parents through regular meetings about pastoral and curriculum matters, informal opportunities for parents to consult with the teachers, and regular newsletters providing advice for the parents on how to support their children's learning. A number of parents were involved recently in landscaping a courtyard within the school which now provides an attractive outdoor area for the children's learning. Funds are raised by the active Parents' Support Group which aid the work of the school.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

In the nursery, the wide range of play activities and the very good learning experiences available in the indoor and outdoor environments contribute to the children's learning and productive play. In the foundation stage (FS), the children work well with each other and are

keen to talk about their learning. In KS1 and KS2, the children participate well in individual, group and whole-class activities. In the best practice, they demonstrate independent thinking and learning. The children are very well behaved, and show interest and enthusiasm in their work.

An analysis of the KS2 assessment data over the past four years shows that, in English and mathematics, the school's performance was below the Northern Ireland (NI) average. When compared with schools in the same free school meals category, the attainments in English were below the average, although the gap is narrowing, and in mathematics, the attainments were in line with the average*.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The quality of provision for English and literacy is satisfactory.

In the FS, the children's talking and listening skills are developed through well-planned play-based activities and effective plenary sessions. The teacher and classroom assistant interact effectively with the children to encourage their oral responses and develop their confidence. In KS1 and KS2, talking and listening skills are developed through effective teacher questioning during shared or guided reading and writing sessions. Most of the children are able to express their ideas clearly during class discussion and reach satisfactory standards. In the best practice, the teachers use a range of effective questioning and the children respond well, often articulating their ideas clearly through extended oral responses.

In the FS, the children respond positively to shared reading sessions and use their phonics skills to link letters to sounds. In KS1, the children attempt to spell new words independently and most are able to sequence stories to demonstrate their understanding of text. By the end of KS2, the majority of children read well and with expression. While a majority read at a level in line with their ability, there is an urgent need to support further the minority of children, across the ability range, who do not reach the reading standards of which they are capable. A few children benefited from a Reading Partnership programme last year and there are appropriate plans to develop this further. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) has recently taken on the role of literacy co-ordinator. While she was absent at the time of the inspection, there is evidence that she has promoted a reading ethos in the school and has made a good start to using quantitative data to identify areas for the development of literacy, including the need to introduce a more systematic approach to the teaching of reading. The inspection endorses this as an important priority. The literacy action plans need to focus more clearly on specific strategies to raise attainment in reading.

In the FS, individual whiteboards and writing frames are used effectively to support early writing. In KS1, the children are able to write instructions and use ICT to present their final work, and, in KS2, they write for a wider range of purposes, including narrative and recount writing. In the best examples of writing seen, the children can build up a story, express their feelings and demonstrate good empathy with a character. The children use ICT effectively to research topics on the internet to support their writing. However, they need more frequent opportunities for extended writing in English, and across the curriculum, in order to develop their writing skills further.

By the end of KS2, the standards achieved in English and literacy are satisfactory.

* The key stage outcomes should be interpreted with caution for small primary schools as a large percentage change from year to year can often be attributed to a very small number of children.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The quality of provision for mathematics and numeracy is satisfactory.

The children experience a range of opportunities to develop their understanding of number, shape and space, measures and data-handling. They use practical equipment and everyday materials to good effect as they develop their ability to sort, match, and count, recognise and create patterns. They employ appropriate mathematical language associated with measures and money. Information and communication technology needs to be used more frequently to support the children's work as they collate, record and graph statistical data.

Mental mathematics sessions were observed in all the classes. In the best practice seen, the children developed their use of mathematical language well and the teachers provided a range of activities which progressed at a realistically fast pace, and which provided for activities well matched to the children's widely varying needs and abilities. The children need more opportunities for investigative and problem-solving tasks. This is an appropriate priority for improvement in this year's mathematics action plan and work on this is ongoing.

Overall, the standards achieved by the children are satisfactory. Most of the children achieve standards in number, shape, measures and data-handling in line with their ability. A minority however do not, and this includes children across the ability range as well as those who have significant additional needs and require more intensive and targeted support.

The recently appointed mathematics co-ordinator provides effective guidance and has a clear vision for the future development of mathematics in the school. Under her guidance, and with the help of the assessment co-ordinator, a recent audit of a wide range of quantitative data provided a useful evaluation of the standards achieved by the children, and identified appropriately that mathematical processes, investigations and problem solving needed a greater emphasis.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The whole-school planning for mathematics provides detailed useful guidance on the progression expected from year 1 through to year 7. In English, there is guidance for the teaching of talking and listening, reading and writing from years 1 to 7. This needs to provide more detail on these aspects, and on the progression expected to inform better the teacher's individual planning. The teachers' medium term planning is undertaken conscientiously; a noteworthy feature being the detailed written evaluations of the extent to which the learning outcomes expected were met.

3.2 TEACHING

The quality of the teaching observed ranged from good to satisfactory, and in most lessons was good. In the best practice: the teachers made good use of learning intentions throughout the lesson to focus the children's attention and to consolidate their learning; interactive white boards were used effectively to engage the children's interest; and, there were good levels of challenge for the most able and appropriate support for those children experiencing difficulties. These aspects of the best practice need to be disseminated across the school.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The school has made a good start to making more extensive and effective use of performance data, including standardised tests and DE benchmarking information, to inform its practice. A C2k computer program was utilised recently to track the children's progress in their standardised scores, and to identify and target underachievement. As a result, "booster classes" were created to provide additional support for groups of children where this analysis of standardised tests suggested that they were capable of higher standards. The school has plans to develop this work further and the inspection strongly endorses this. Additionally, the school needs to place a stronger emphasis on evaluating other forms of first-hand evidence, including the more regular examination of samples of the children's written work to complement the analysis of data presently ongoing.

The teachers mark the children's work regularly and annotate the work well with positive comments on how it can be improved further.

3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The quality of the provision for special educational needs (SEN) is satisfactory. The leadership of the school gives a high priority to promoting inclusion. There is evidence that the SENCO ensures an effective and ongoing involvement with the parents and external agencies where needed. The individual education plans produced by the teachers for individuals or groups of children were of a good quality.

The school identifies well those children who need support with aspects of their learning. This support is provided almost exclusively within class and through the class teacher. The majority of children needing support make satisfactory progress in line with their abilities. However, a minority do not, and these children need additional support to that provided in class. The school needs to consider alternative and additional ways within its budget where their needs can be met more effectively, in particular, providing additional support to improve significantly their reading abilities.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The Principal has been in post for 20 years. He promotes an inclusive whole-school ethos based on mutual respect and is strongly supportive of the welfare of all of the staff. He has been very successful in establishing and maintaining a wide range of links and good working relationships with the local community. He is supported by the teaching staff, all of whom have recently agreed to co-ordinate major curricular areas within the school. There is now a need to re-examine the present distribution of some of the roles and responsibilities of the staff and to provide a sharper whole-school focus on improving the standards achieved by a minority of the children.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The school development plan (SDP) is compliant with the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005 and sets out clear priorities for the medium and longer term. The school needs to consider reducing the number of priorities set out, in order to give a greater emphasis to the development of literacy, particularly reading

and independent writing, whilst also maintaining a strong focus on numeracy. Action plans accompanying the SDP underpin well the whole-school priorities, although they need to identify more clearly the targets for raising attainment for the children in literacy and numeracy.

4.3 ACCOMMODATION

Very good use is made of all the available space in the school; the staff work well to create inviting learning environments in the classrooms, corridors and outside spaces. The quality of caretaking is very good, and the school and surrounding grounds are very well maintained.

4.4 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

In meeting the governors during the inspection it was evident they supported wholeheartedly the Principal and the staff in the implementation of the SDP.

A feasibility study setting out various options for the future development of schools in the area was carried out in the recent past by the Western Education and Library Board. The uncertainty associated with any further delay in taking forward action on these options, accompanied by any further significant decline in numbers is unhelpful for the medium and long-term planning of this school. This uncertainty needs to be resolved as soon as possible in the best interests of the children.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the very good quality of the pastoral provision;
- the very good behaviour of the children, and their enthusiasm and interest in their work
- the hard working and dedicated teaching and support staff, and the good quality of teaching observed in most of the lessons;
- the good start made to the use of quantitative data for monitoring, evaluating and target setting;
- the effectiveness of the Principal in ensuring an inclusive and supportive ethos, and his ongoing commitment and success in developing and maintaining close links with the parents and the local community; and
- the strong support of the parents and governors for the work of the school

5.2 The areas for improvement include the need for:

- a sharper focus on, and an improvement in the standards achieved in literacy and numeracy for a minority of the children across the ability range; and
- a more effective approach to meeting the needs of those children who need additional intensive support in particular for reading.

5.3 In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this school is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in achievements and standards and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the learners are to be met more effectively. The Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-24 month period.

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 staff.

6. THE NURSERY UNIT

6.1 The main strengths within the nursery's educational and pastoral provision are as follows:

- the carefully planned programme is broad and balanced, and offers very good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The staff promote skilfully the children's thinking skills and personal capabilities through investigative play activities. The children's knowledge and understanding of early mathematical and scientific concepts are of a good quality; they are making good progress. The atmosphere and environment of the nursery provide valuable opportunities for the promotion of the children's language skills; these skills are developing successfully in accordance with each child's developmental stage;
- the children, including those in their penultimate pre-school year, are well settled and show a very good interest in the play activities. They are increasingly confident, familiar with the routines and are becoming more independent;
- the quality of the interaction between the staff and the children is consistently of a very good standard and, on occasions, outstanding. The daily routines are managed well and provide lengthy periods of uninterrupted play;
- the staff's planning and assessment practices are very good. They evaluate effectively the children's progress and the information is used appropriately to meet the needs of all of the children;
- the teacher -in -charge of the nursery demonstrates very good leadership and fosters a reflective approach to the work of the dedicated staff team. The nursery's development plan identifies appropriate priorities for improvement, for example, the further development of the outdoor play provision, which evolve appropriately from a systematic approach to self-evaluation;
- there are well-developed links between the nursery and the FS. These links support the smooth transition of the children to year one in the primary school and inform appropriately the FS planning.

6.2 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this nursery is very good. The nursery is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the learners; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

No follow-up inspection of the nursery is required.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON ASHLEA PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY UNIT

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1
Attending full-time	26
Attending part-time	0
Under 3 years of age*	12
With statement of special educational needs (SEN)**	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4***	0
At CoP stages 1 or 2***	0
With English as an additional language	1

* On 1 July

** Special Educational Needs

*** The stages refer to those set out in the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	92.3%
Average attendance for the previous year.	91.7%

2. Duration of Sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
4¼ hours	-	-

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	1	
Nursery Assistants		
Qualified Nursery Assistants	1	

Number of: ***	
Students	
Trainees	

*** Total placements since September of current year

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued	26
Percentage returned	50%
Number of written comments	5

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