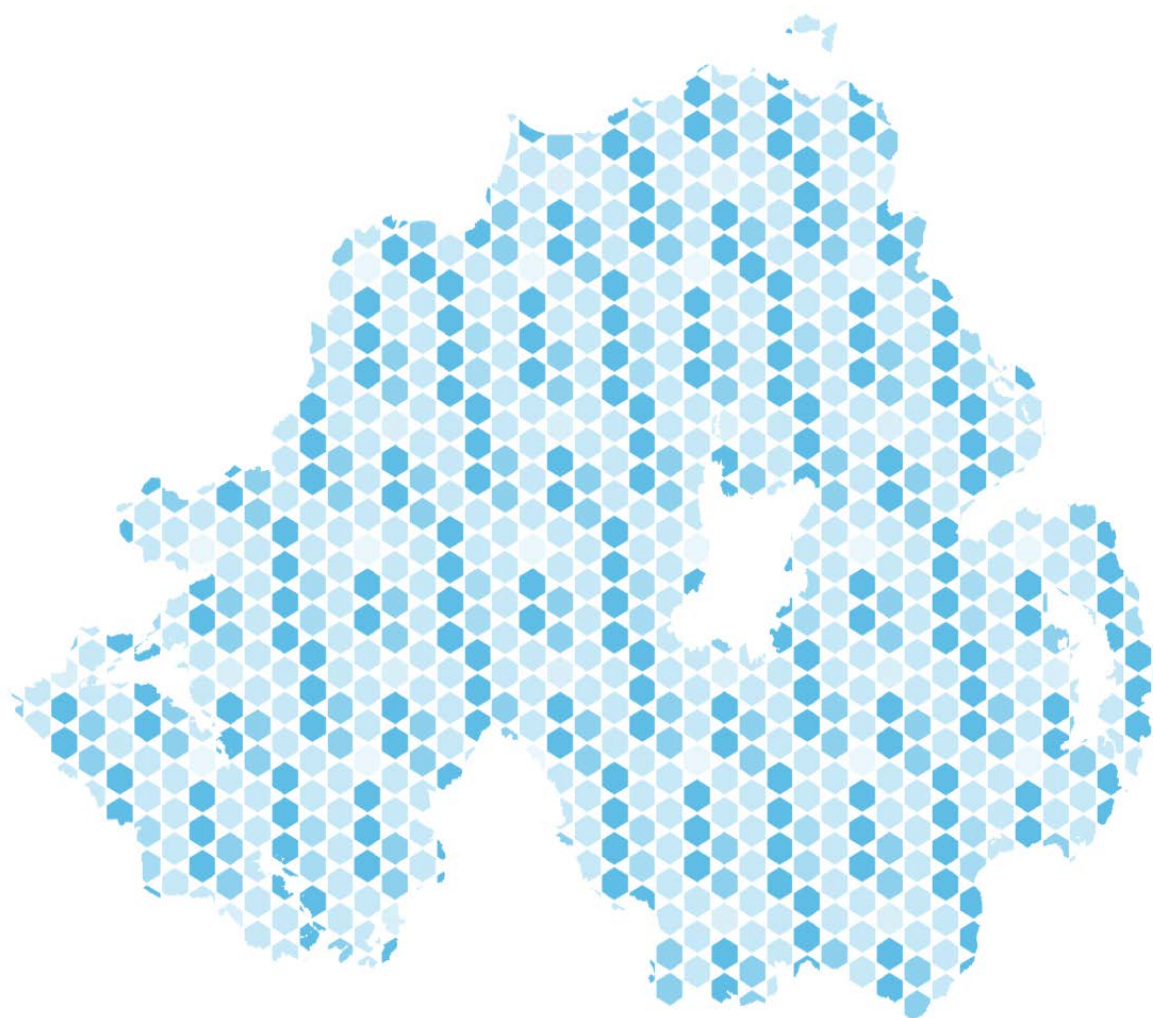


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Ballywalter Primary School,
Co Down

Report of an Inspection
in April 2013

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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

Ballywalter Primary School is situated on the Ards peninsula in County Down. The enrolment of the school has remained fairly steady over the past four years and currently stands at 161 children. At the time of the inspection, 30% of the children were entitled to free school meals and 20% of the children were identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning. Over the past year the school has experienced significant changes in management and staffing and at the time of inspection interim management arrangements were in place pending the appointment of a new Principal; four of the nine class teachers present during the inspection are employed in a temporary capacity.

2. Focus of 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 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, learning and teaching, and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively.

Summary of key findings

Achievements and standards	Satisfactory
Quality of provision	Satisfactory
Leadership and management	Satisfactory

KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

3. Achievements and standards

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

- Most of the children are enthusiastic and well-motivated to learn; they listen well in class and contribute with confidence to group and class discussions. When provided with the opportunity, they work well in pairs and small groups. The children's learning is fragmented throughout the school due to the inconsistency of the teaching approaches used. The development of the children's thinking skills and personal capabilities is a particular strength in key stage (KS) 2.

- There are insufficient opportunities for the children in the foundation stage (FS) to express their ideas independently in writing. In KS 2 the children respond well to the opportunities provided for extended writing and use ICT well for research, editing and recording purposes.
- An analysis of the KS 2 assessment data, over the past four years, shows that the school's performance in English was significantly above both the Northern Ireland (NI) average and the average of schools in the same free school meals (FSM) category in one of the last four years but significantly below both categories in the last three years although there has been an improving trend year on year. In mathematics, the school's performance, was in line with both the NI average and the average of schools in the same FSMs category in one of the last four years but below the average in the last three years.
- By the end of year 7, most of the children attain good standards in writing, and talking and listening; the most able children are able to read with a good level of fluency and expression. They are also knowledgeable in all of the areas of the mathematics curriculum and have good flexibility in using a range of mathematic strategies. By the end of KS1, the most able children have a good understanding of tables and place value; they are less confident in explaining their mathematical thinking and to applying their learning in different contexts.
- A majority of the children in the school who have been identified with special educational needs (SEN) are making satisfactory progress against their individual learning targets, including those children provided with additional support for literacy and numeracy.

4. Provision for learning

The quality of the provision for learning is satisfactory.

- The quality of the teaching observed ranged from outstanding to satisfactory with the majority of the teaching being good or better; a significant minority of the teaching is satisfactory and has areas for improvement. In the best practice, the teaching is well-paced and teachers use effective questioning which encourages extended responses from the children. Where the teaching is less successful the teachers' planning and the activities provided are not well-matched to the range of ability of the children and there is insufficient differentiation or challenge to meet the full ability range within the class. The good practice and use of effective teaching strategies evident in KS 2 needs to be disseminated across all key stages to support teachers in raising the standards further across the school. There is an over reliance on the use of worksheets, particularly in the FS classes.
- A high priority has been placed on developing all aspects of the provision for literacy in the school, and as a result the quality of the provision for literacy is good. There is a structured programme in place for the teaching of reading and phonics within the school. In the FS and KS1 the children are beginning to experiment with letter, word, and sentence formation through play-based activities and topic work. A particular strength of the school is the highly effective reading partnership programme that is undertaken by the classroom assistants. Almost all of the children who take part in the reading partnership programme make progress and enjoy the experience.

- At present, the provision for mathematics in the school is underdeveloped. The school has identified mathematics as an area for development; it will be important for the school to develop a more progressive, challenging and systematic programme of mathematics and to identify the action to be taken to raise the standard of mathematics across the school.
- Recently, a multi-purpose ICT and library suite has been set up in the school to facilitate the development of ICT. A Matrix of skills has been developed to support the teachers in the development of the children's ICT skills across the school.
- The quality of the provision for special educational needs is satisfactory. The school uses data well to identify early those children who require additional support. The individual education plans (IEP) need to be more sharply focused on the children's learning with more robust systems put in place to monitor the effectiveness of intervention strategies. The withdrawal support for mathematics is underdeveloped and needs to be made available to those children identified as underachieving in this area of learning.
- The staff have developed some useful background planning for play-based learning. Overall, however, the planning does not guide the staff sufficiently in their work with the children; the play programme is underdeveloped and does not build effectively enough on the children's previous experiences. It will be important for the staff in the FS and KS1 to work together to plan for progression through all areas of the play programme.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is very good. The teachers work hard to provide an inclusive environment for all the children. Around the school the children's work is celebrated in attractive displays. The children are well-behaved, welcoming to visitors and respectful to their peers and the adults within the school. The children's views are listened and responded to through the representatives in the school council and as a result the children are able to contribute meaningfully to the life and development of the school. There is an effective system in place to reward the children's achievements and good behaviour with very good opportunities available for them to engage in a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- The school encourages the children to adopt healthy lifestyles through the good attention given to healthy eating and physical activity. The children are encouraged to make healthy choices; they are encouraged to eat healthily. Physical activity is promoted through the provision of a range of curricular and extra-curricular sports activities.

5. Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory.

- Currently the school leadership is in a state of transition. There is very good internal communication, and a strong sense of collegiality within the school. A good start has been made to the collection and analysis of performance data; the school has identified appropriately the need to review and develop this process to inform learning and teaching and to address underachievement. At present, due to the high number of temporary staff employed within the school, there is

not an equitable distribution of roles and responsibilities. It will be important for the new Principal and the Board of Governors to review the deployment of staff and the distribution of roles and responsibilities to provide more effective curricular leadership that focuses more sharply on the provision made for all of the children and on raising standards.

- The current school development plan (SDP) was developed under the guidance of the previous Principal; it complies fully with the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010. The SDP identifies appropriately important priorities and there are clear associated action plans. There is a developing culture of self-evaluation within the school; although some important areas for development have been identified in the SDP, a higher priority needs to be given to developing the provision and raising the standards for the children. Appropriate strategies need to be developed to monitor and evaluate the quality of the provision.
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the evaluation is that the parents, staff and community can have confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are highly supportive of the staff and are committed to the improvement of the school. The governors are well informed about the standards within the school; they understand their roles and responsibilities and provide challenge, when necessary, to improve and support the work of the school.
- The school has developed very good communication with the parents and links with a wide range of external support agencies. An enthusiastic Parent Teacher Association raises valuable funds which are used to enhance further the provision for the children.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding the children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

CONCLUSION

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 achievement and standards, learning and teaching, leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively.

The areas for improvement include the need:

- to provide more effective strategic leadership and management at all levels to effect sustainable improvement in learning and teaching;
- to improve the provision and standards of literacy, numeracy and ICT, and
- for the teachers to develop a shared understanding of what constitutes effective learning and teaching, specifically in relation to differentiation and progression, in order to raise further the children's attainments.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-24 month period.

6. Summary of questionnaire responses

PARENTAL QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Issued	128
Number of Questionnaires Returned	45
Percentage of Returns	35%
Number of Comments	18

Almost all of the responses from the parental questionnaires indicated a high level of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted the supportive, caring and approachable staff and the high regard in which the school is held in the local community. The small number of concerns raised in the written comments has been discussed with the governors and the acting Principal.

TEACHERS QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Returned	8
Number of Comments	*

SUPPORT STAFF QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Returned	9
Number of Comments	*

* Denotes a number less than 5.

Almost all of the staff who responded indicated that they enjoy working in the school and welcomed the opportunities provided for them by the Governors to continue with their professional development.

In discussions with the governors, they praised the dedication of the staff, the quality of the pastoral care, and the importance of the school within the community.

The inspectors also met with a group of the year 6 children and representatives of the School Council. The children reported that they feel happy and safe in school and that they are aware of what to do if they have any concerns. They spoke positively about school life.

BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Ballywalter Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 29/04/13**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 401-1566** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Year 1 Intake	19	29	23	28	28
Enrolments					
Primary	159	153	157	168	160
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 are based on the total of the primary and reception enrolments only.

- C. Average Attendance for the Previous School Year
 (expressed as a percentage): 93.9% **NI Avg Att: 94.7%**

Average Attendance for those children on the
 Special Educational Needs Register: 93.4%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit	Irish Medium Unit
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- D. i. Number of Teachers
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 8.6 0 0 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 18.6 NI PTR: 20.2
- iii. Average Class Size: 23
- iv. Class Size (Range): 15 to 29
- v. Ancillary Support:
 Number of Hours **Per Week:**
- | | |
|---|----|
| i. Clerical support: | 20 |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support: | 30 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 95 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 0.6%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 20%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 30%
- x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2011/12 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics, and Irish (in Irish-medium schools):
- | | | |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------|
| English | Mathematics | Irish |
| 79% | 82% | N/A |

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