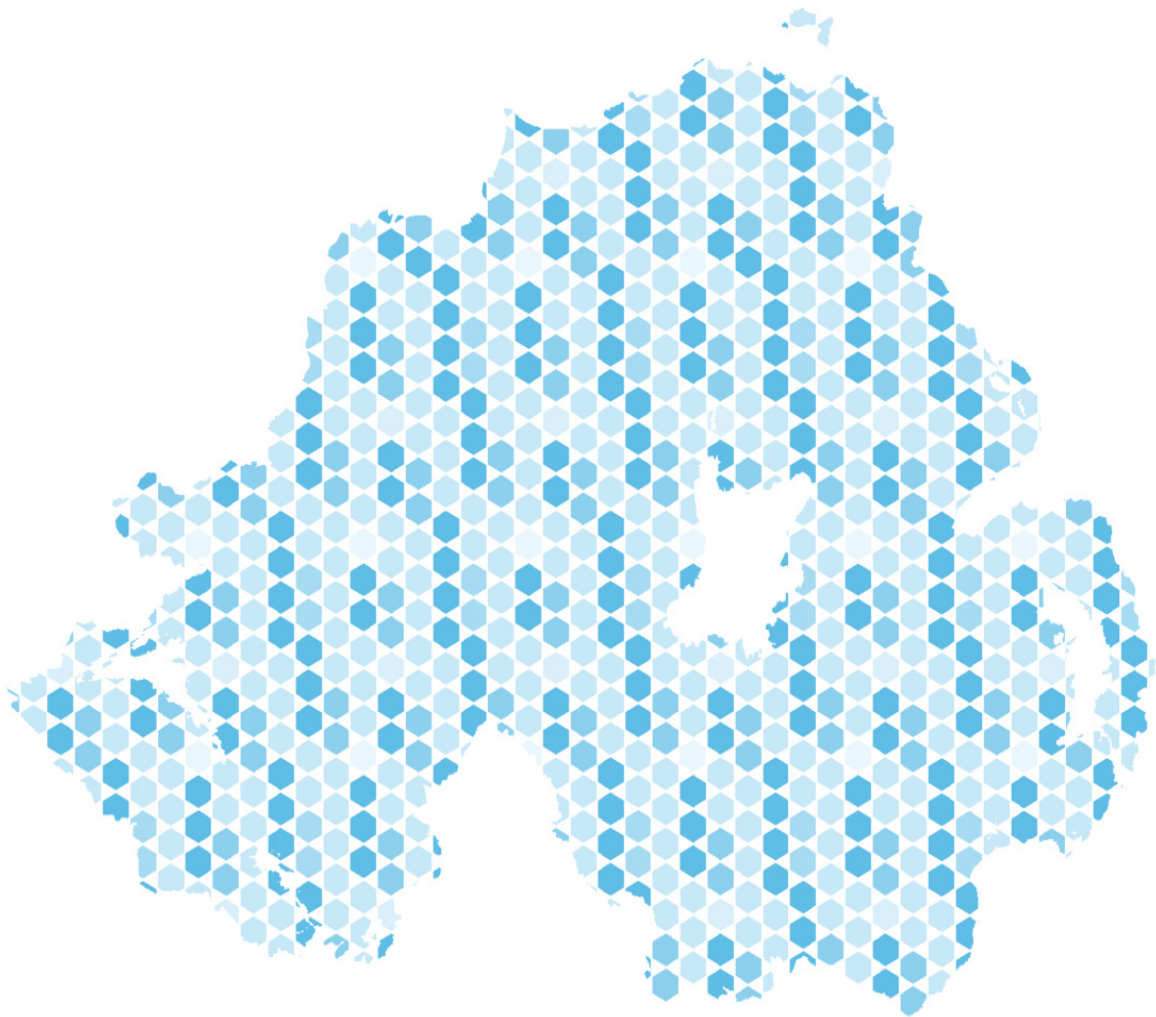


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Bridge Integrated Primary
School, Banbridge

Report of an Inspection
in January 2012



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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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. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Bridge Integrated Primary School is located in the town of Banbridge and the children come from the local and surrounding areas. The school is oversubscribed in the past four years and the enrolment currently stands at 412. Approximately 19% of the children are entitled to free school meals and almost 20% have been identified as needing additional support with aspects of their learning, including a small number of children who have statements of special educational need (SEN).

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, the teaching staff and the support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors), a group of the children from year 6 and representatives from the newly formed school council.

Of the 102 questionnaires issued to the parents, 51% were returned to Inspection Services Branch, including 20 which contained additional written comments. Most of the questionnaires expressed high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In most of their written comments the parents highlighted the caring and friendly atmosphere, satisfaction with their children's progress and the importance given to the school's involvement in the local community. A small number of the parents raised concerns about aspects of the life and work of the school and these are addressed in the body of the report.

Forty-five percent of the teachers and eleven of the support staff responded to the online questionnaires. Almost all of the responses indicated very high levels of support for the Principal and the work of the school. The staff reported that they feel valued, enjoy working in the school and work collaboratively as a team in developing the school in the best interests of the children.

The governors expressed their strong support for the work of the school. They spoke very positively about the leadership of the Principal, the commitment and dedication of the staff to the care and education of the children, and the close links that the school has developed with the local community.

In discussions held with a group of children in year 6, they talked positively about their experiences in school. The children valued the support given by their teachers and enjoyed the range of activities in the school. They indicated strongly that they feel happy in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their care and well-being.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is very good.

The staff knows the children very well and works hard to ensure that the children's needs and welfare are central to the life of the school. They develop an inclusive culture which demonstrates a strong family ethos where the children are given valuable opportunities to voice their opinions and to be involved in decision-making at different levels. Plans are advanced to consult further with the parents and review aspects of the information available to them relating to this important aspect of the work of the school.

The well-planned Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) programme integrates effectively with other areas of learning and provides good opportunities for the children to explore social and emotional topics, and investigate environmental issues at a local and global level. The children have very good opportunities to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which enrich their personal development and learning experiences in sporting, drama and social contexts. The effective links with the local businesses and churches in the community enhance the children's learning experiences and opportunities for mutual understanding.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education (DE).

1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. The children are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles through eating nutritious food at break and lunch and by taking part in a whole-school physical education programme. The school has made a considerable investment in the services of a dedicated teacher to develop a programme which provides opportunities for the children to develop a challenging range of physical skills and encourages positive attitudes to physical activity. During the inspection, the children were observed enjoying gymnastics and energetic outdoor activities. They are encouraged to participate in swimming and athletics events.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

There are good links with the parents and the local community. The parents receive information about the children's learning through an annual written report, newsletters, formal parent-teacher consultations and some curricular meetings. The school meets the statutory requirements for reporting to the parents. There is, however, a need to develop further the strategies to communicate with the parents about how well their children are developing appropriate skills and attitudes, and progressing in their learning as they move through the year groups. There are many examples within the school of very good collaborative work with feeder schools about transitional arrangements and the sharing of appropriate information when the children begin and leave the primary school.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

The range of the children's ability in each of the classes is wide and includes the most able to those with complex learning needs. In most of the lessons observed, the children were highly motivated and engaged in the learning process as exemplified by the confident and articulate children who justified and explained their ideas. From an early stage, these children managed their own learning well, responded enthusiastically to challenging activities, made decisions about the most appropriate resources to use and most persevered to complete the learning tasks.

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 fluctuated and is below the Northern Ireland (NI) average for three out of the four years. Compared with schools in the same free school meals category, the levels of attainment in English and mathematics are below the average for similar schools in three out of the four years. An analysis of the school's internal data indicates that standards have improved significantly in KS2; most of the children's are working at a level commensurate with their age and ability in English and a majority of the children in mathematics.

The school's data indicates that most of the children with special educational needs make good progress in English and a majority of the children make good progress in mathematics.

The school has participated in the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) ICT accreditation scheme for a number of years and in the recently revised scheme, overall, by the end of KS2, the children achieve standards slightly above the NI average.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The overall quality of the provision in English and literacy is very good.

The literacy co-ordinators work supportively with the staff to identify key areas of development in the English programme. They have made a good start to using data to set appropriate targets for literacy and to develop policy and practice within the school. The school is appropriately developing the provision and the standards in writing.

Across the key stages, most of the children have very good talking and listening skills. In the foundation stage (FS) and KS1, activities such as shared reading and songs and rhymes, enhance and develop the children's oral skills and build their confidence. The Dissolving Boundaries Project and links with other primary schools are effectively enabling the older children to develop very good oral communication skills.

The children achieve very good standards in reading. The children enjoy having regular opportunities to select books independently from the well-resourced school library and, with the support of the class teachers, are developing an appropriate range of reading strategies to interpret unfamiliar text. The classroom assistants provide additional and effective one-to-one support for those children who require help with their reading. In years 6 and 7, the children are using the internet well for independent research purposes and the selection of information. By the end of KS2, almost all of the children read with fluency and an understanding of the text.

The standards achieved by the children in writing are good. In the FS and KS1, basic conventions such as simple sentence structure and letter writing are developed effectively through shared writing activities, writing frames and work-sheets. The children are able to write for a variety of purposes and audiences in KS2, and the use of real-life and historical and environmental contexts make this work more meaningful to them. In addition, the children have successfully gained recognition for their writing skills beyond the school community, in a Learning NI competition. Information and communication technology, including the use of the interactive whiteboard, is used successfully by most of the teachers to stimulate interest and to support writing. Overall, the standards in literacy are very good.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The overall quality of the provision mathematics and numeracy is good.

The numeracy co-ordinators work effectively as a team and lead the staff well by focusing on the improvement of the mathematics provision and raising standards. They recently guided the teachers in the revision of the school's programme for numeracy to ensure greater breadth, balance and progression in the children's learning.

The quality of the children's learning experiences and the development of their skills and understanding of key mathematical concepts are, however, inconsistent as they progress through the school. It is appropriate that the school's current action plan includes the further development of progression in processes and updating the school's numeracy policy to reflect the recent changes made in learning and teaching. As a priority, it will be important for the school to monitor and evaluate the effect of these changes on the children's attainments.

In the best practice, observed during the inspection, the teachers incorporated stimulating mental mathematics activities to develop the children's thinking and motivated them to apply their skills with confidence. In the less effective lessons, there were fewer opportunities for the most able children to extend their knowledge and application of mathematical processes.

During discussions with a group of year 4 children, most were able to draw on a number of mental strategies to respond to a range of mathematical questions. In similar discussions, the group of year 7 children expressed their enjoyment of mathematics and demonstrated very good levels of competence and confidence across aspects of number, including estimation and processes, problem-solving, shape and space, measurement and data-handling. There is a need for the staff to develop greater challenge and progression in the children's numeracy skills in the FS and KS1. By the end of KS2, most of the children make good progress in mathematics and numeracy.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The teachers have agreed a consistent approach to short-term planning; however, there are variations in the extent of its implementation in and among the year groups. In the effective teaching, the most skilful teachers and classroom assistants go beyond the written planning by building on the children's prior knowledge and skills in order to extend their learning.

The medium-term planning is centred appropriately on clearly defined learning intentions which guide effectively the work in most of the classrooms and outlines progression and opportunities for connected learning. Generally, the teachers complete useful written

evaluations of their planned work which highlight the extent to which the learning intentions were met and help identify the future learning needs of groups and individual children. Throughout the school, a majority of the children have very good opportunities to contribute to the planning process.

3.2 TEACHING

During the inspection, most of the teaching observed was good or better; a minority of the lessons evaluated were outstanding. In the best practice, the teachers had high expectations, interacted effectively and matched the work to both challenge and support the children's individual needs. They used a wide range of teaching approaches and positive behaviour management strategies, including whole-class teaching and opportunities for group and paired work during practical activities and discussions. Frequently, the classroom assistants supported effectively the children with additional learning needs. In one-fifth of the lessons observed, the classroom management strategies were not good enough to sustain the children's concentration. The planning, teaching and learning strategies were not matched sufficiently to the interest and ability levels of all of the children.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

In most of the classes, the teachers provide prompt oral feedback to improve the children's learning and they regularly mark the children's written work. In the best practice, effective marking promotes improvement and the children are encouraged to engage in self-evaluation of their learning. The school needs to develop a greater consistency in the application of the assessment for learning strategies, across all key stages.

The school use a range of standardised and non-standardised testing to assess the children's level of achievement in English and mathematics. Recently, the staff has begun to use more effectively this assessment information to identify and target underachievement and to plan for the continued raising of standards. The school has identified the need to monitor more rigorously and evaluate the effectiveness of these targets on learning and teaching, and, in particular, to ensure that all the children experience challenge in their learning.

3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The quality of the provision for special educational needs SEN is good.

The school gives a high priority to those children who require support with their learning and allocates a substantial resource to improving the children's learning. There is a very inclusive and welcoming ethos for children with special educational needs in the school; the children are identified at an early stage through the appropriate use of diagnostic tests and teachers' observations. Parents are kept well informed at all stages about the children's progress and development.

The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) provides very good leadership and management of the complex organisation of the SEN provision. She has created a highly skilled Learning Support Team (LST) and is developing a whole-school staff development programme regarding SEN. It would be appropriate for the school leadership team to review the current model of provision and to ensure a greater consistency between the high qualities of the children's learning experiences in the withdrawal sessions and their support in class to address further the levels of underachievement.

The current SEN provision is mainly through withdrawal sessions provided by the LST for children with more complex needs and to address the underachievement in literacy and numeracy. This withdrawal support is of a very good quality and is linked effectively to the children's work in class through careful and regular liaison with the class teachers. The sessions are well informed by the individual education plans (IEPs) that contain relevant targets focusing on the primary needs of the children and are monitored closely and reviewed regularly by the LST and staff. The children respond well to this provision; all of the children are motivated learners and suitably challenged and supported in their learning. Their individual needs are met successfully within each lesson.

The school receives beneficial multi-disciplinary support for those children requiring specialised help through, for example, the services of the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) Curriculum Advisory Support Service (CASS) and other agencies to support learning and teaching.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The overall quality of the leadership and management is good.

The Principal is in post since 2005 and has worked in the school for sixteen years. She provides very good strategic leadership and exhibits a commitment to the inclusive ethos of the integrated school. The Principal gives a high priority to the well-being and care of all the children and to raising further the standards they attain. She has developed an effective team approach whereby the talents and expertise of individuals and teams are valued and utilised well in the school to benefit the learners.

The Vice-principal, the acting Vice-principal and the co-ordinators are very supportive of the Principal. Many of the co-ordinators are newly appointed and have made a good start in providing appropriate guidance for all of the staff in developing the children's learning. There is a need to ensure that the co-ordinators' leadership and management skills are developed further to consistently support whole-school improvement through the monitoring, evaluating and action planning processes.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The school improvement process is clearly linked to the school development plan (SDP) which is underpinned by a recent analysis of qualitative and quantitative information. Appropriate policies and action plans are in place for the key curricular areas that are focused on raising further the children's standards and achievements. The school meets the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations 2005. As the current cycle is coming to an end, it is appropriate for the staff, Principal and governors to participate in more rigorous self-evaluation and action-planning for school improvement in order to raise further the standards in literacy and numeracy.

There is a need for the governors and the senior leadership team to review the deployment of staff in relation to the issues identified in the report.

4.3 ACCOMODATION

The teachers and other staff have created stimulating learning environments in the classrooms and in the shared resource areas which support and celebrate the children's work. Good use is made of the available outdoor space to provide learning opportunities, including the ECO garden, and the school is very well maintained.

4.4 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The school has a good selection of resources to stimulate the children's interest and extend their understanding.

The governors are fully involved in the strategic planning and policy development for the school. They support effectively the Principal and the staff in the implementation of the SDP and they have a very good understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by the school.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the high quality of the pastoral provision characterised by the inclusive and child-centred ethos that supports the development of the children's confidence and social skills;
- the very good standards attained by the children in ICT and in Literacy;
- the very good quality of the special educational needs provision in the learning support classes;
- the quality of most of the teaching which was good or better;
- the effective links and partnerships with the governors, the parents and the local community; and
- the very good quality of the leadership and management provided by the Principal.

5.2 The area for improvement includes:

- the need to develop further the methods of planning and assessment in order to meet the varying needs of all the children.

5.3 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the school's progress on the areas for improvement.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- The school needs to review the security of the low fence around the foundation stage playground and the securing of the main gate at the entrance.
- There is severe traffic congestion at arrival and departure times each day.

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