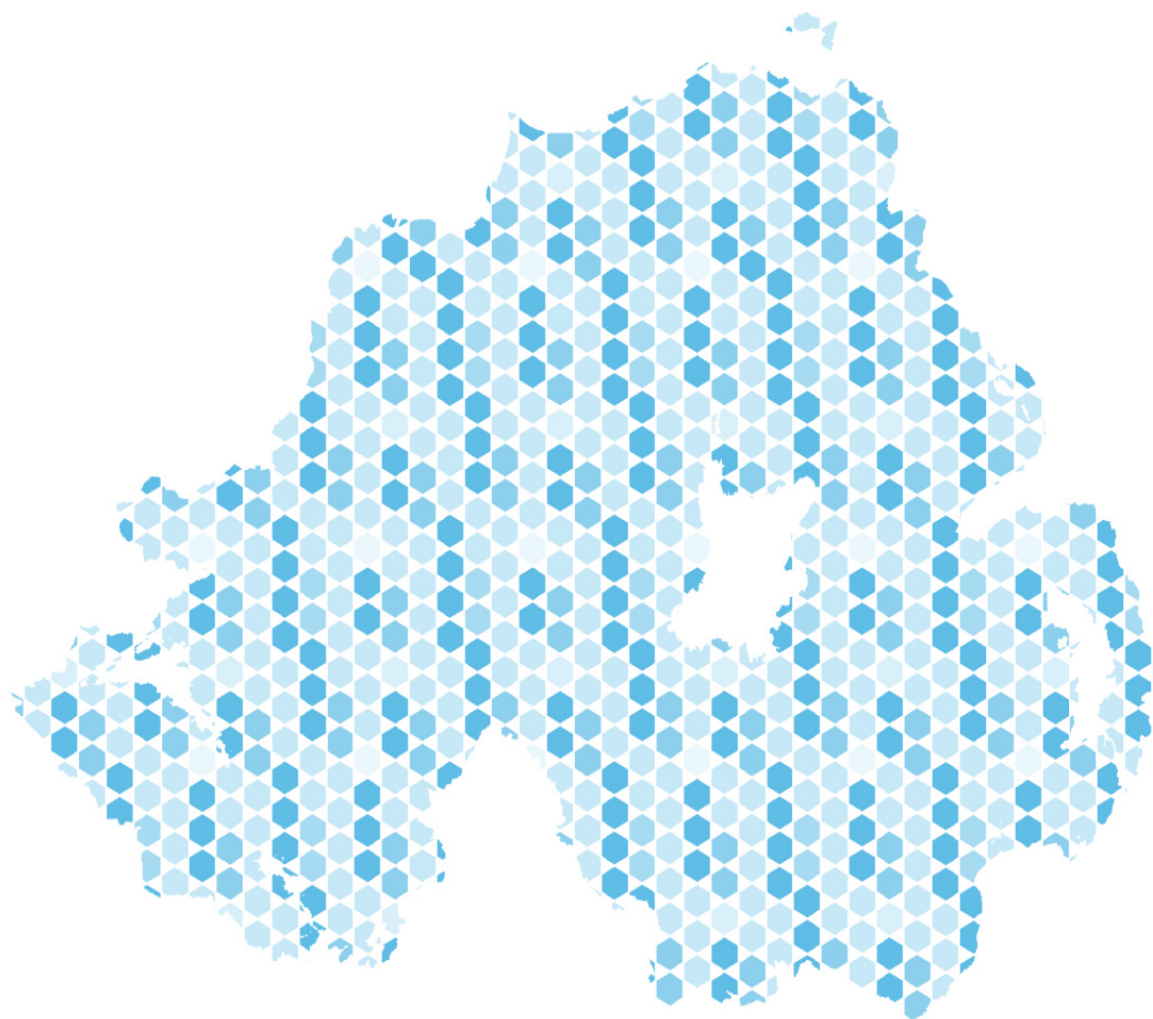


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Kirkinriola Primary School,  
Ballymena

Report of an Inspection  
in March 2011

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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: Kirkinriola Primary Ballymena** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 28/03/11**  
 ii. **School Reference Number: 301-0780** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Year 1 Intake	19	17	16	16	8
<b>Enrolments</b>					
Primary	78	89	99	105	93
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 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): 95.4% **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): 5 0 0 0  
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 18.6 NI PTR: 20.7
- iii. Average Class Size: 23.3
- iv. Class Size (Range): 21 to 29
- v. Ancillary Support:  
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- |   |    |
|---|----|
| i. Clerical support:  | 20 |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support:           | 35 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 3  |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 0%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 19%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 12%
- x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2009/10 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics:
- |                |                    |
|----------------|--------------------|
| <b>English</b> | <b>Mathematics</b> |
| 40%            | 60%                |

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT**

Kirkinriola Primary School is situated two miles north of Ballymena. A majority of the children come from the surrounding rural area, within a three mile radius of the school. Overall, the enrolment has risen over the past five years; however, it decreased from 105 in 2009/10 and currently stands at 93. The school has identified just over 19% of the children as needing additional support with aspects of their learning. Approximately 12% of the children are entitled to free school meals and two are newcomer children.

### **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 teaching and support staff to complete confidential questionnaires prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and the children from year 6.

Sixty questionnaires were issued to the parents; approximately 75% were returned to Inspection Services Branch and 30 contained additional written comments. The inspection team also met with a small group of parents on the first day of the inspection at their request. Most of responses from the questionnaires indicated support for the work of the school; however, a significant minority expressed concerns, as did the parents who met with the inspection team. The concerns related to: the quality of aspects of the provision for learning and the pastoral care; the quality of the leadership of the school; and the standing of the school in the local community.

Six of the teachers and seven of the support staff completed the confidential online questionnaires. Although the teachers and support staff expressed support for the work of the school, a majority of the teachers and nearly all of the support staff highlighted concerns relating to staff welfare, low morale and the quality of the leadership of the school.

The governors expressed their support for the hard work of the Principal and the staff. They stated that they were kept well-informed by the Principal about the work of the school and progress on the school development plan (SDP). The governors indicated that the school is facing a number of issues relating to the working relationships between the Principal and the staff, and some of the parents. Two of the governors made further contact with the inspection team during the inspection, to share their views on the work of the school and seek clarification on the inspection process.

In discussions held with the year 6 children, they talked with enthusiasm about how they enjoy school and in particular the art and physical education activities. They indicated that they feel safe in school and know whom to speak to if they have any concerns.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) has reported to the Principal and representatives of the governors the views emerging from the parents', teachers' and support staff questionnaires. Where relevant, these matters are commented on in the main body of the report.

#### **1.4 PASTORAL CARE**

The quality of pastoral care in the school is satisfactory. Most of the teachers have good working relationships with the children in their classes, are sensitive to their needs and have a good knowledge of their outside interests and achievements. The children are polite and respectful to adults and their peers. During the inspection, most of the children were well-behaved in class.

The school has a positive reward policy; however, it is not applied consistently across the school and it does not promote or reward effectively positive behaviour in some classes. The Principal and teachers need to review the appropriateness of the positive reward systems currently employed within the classes, and to extend the opportunities to seek, listen and respond to the views of the children in order to improve the overall quality of their learning experiences.

#### **1.5 CHILD PROTECTION**

The school has satisfactory arrangements in place for the safeguarding of children. These arrangements reflect broadly the guidance issued by the Department of Education (DE); however, protocols relating to aspects of the children's personal care need to be agreed and shared with the staff and the parents.

#### **1.6 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY**

The school communicates regularly with the parents through a weekly newsletter. Curriculum information sessions are provided for the parents annually and there is an induction evening for the parents of the year 1 children. The school organises a wide range of events to which the parents are encouraged to attend; for example, a 'back to school picnic', harvest celebration, and book fair. Additionally, the school is working to improve communication with parents through a regular bulletin from the governors and the development of a website. The school makes good use of statutory organisations, other agencies, visitors to the school and links with the community to broaden and enhance the children's learning experiences.

### **2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS**

#### **2.1 LEARNING**

The children have a positive attitude towards their work and interact and work well with one another. When given interesting and appropriately challenging tasks they are motivated, talk confidently about, and engage well in, their lessons. Overall, at the foundation stage (FS) and key stage (KS) 1 the children have insufficient opportunities to develop independent learning skills; the teachers need to manage the children's learning more effectively to ensure that they are engaged meaningfully in their learning at all times.

An analysis of the KS2 assessment data over the past four years shows that, overall, in English and mathematics the school's performance has been consistently below the average for Northern Ireland (NI) and there is a downward trend. Compared with similar schools in the same free school meals category, the children's levels of attainment in English and mathematics have also been below average<sup>1</sup>.

## 2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

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

The children's talking and listening skills are satisfactory. Within KS1 and KS2 the children are given limited opportunities to participate in challenging, collaborative group work with clearly defined roles. The teachers in the FS do not provide the children with sufficient guidance to enable them to engage effectively with one another in question and answer sessions. Although the children are able to contribute with increasing confidence to class discussions by year 7, they need more opportunities to develop the full range of talking and listening skills for and within a variety of purposes and contexts.

There is an attractive and well-resourced library area within the school and a good emphasis placed on, and opportunities for, reading for enjoyment. The school has introduced a banded reading book system and a new phonics scheme to provide a more systematic approach to the teaching of reading. The teachers have agreed an approach to guided reading; the literacy co-ordinator needs to ensure that new or temporary staff receive training, to ensure consistency in its implementation.

The children's overall standards in reading are satisfactory. Across the key stages, the children are able to discuss enthusiastically their text preferences, favourite authors and characters and indicated that they enjoy reading, and a majority are able to read with fluency and expression. Within the FS and KS1 they acquire the basic reading skills through the use of shared and guided reading. The children in the FS have good opportunities to enjoy books during play-based learning and formal story time; however, for a minority of the children the level of challenge within their reading books is too low. The approach to teaching reading in KS1 is inconsistent with that in the FS and does not include a wide enough range of strategies to meet the developing needs of the children. At KS2 the teachers use novels as the main approach to developing the children's reading skills and the majority of the associated reading activities consist mainly of a narrow range of comprehension activities. Consequently, the children have insufficient opportunities to broaden and deepen their understanding of a wide variety of texts and genre.

Within the FS the children experiment with letter and word formation through a variety of activities including the use of play dough, sand trays, magnetic letters and whiteboards. The teachers in the FS do not provide the children with appropriately focused opportunities to develop their initial writing and phonic skills in order to help them become independent writers. In KS1 and KS2, the children write for a limited range of audiences and purposes resulting in poorly developed writing skills for their age and stage of development. The overall standard of the children's written work is inadequate.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

The literacy co-ordinator has introduced a long-term planning scheme for literacy and has consulted with the staff to agree a whole-school action plan for literacy. The co-ordinator and staff need to review the targets and actions currently identified in order to place a more specific focus on improving the quality of the children's writing and to raise the overall standards of achievement in literacy.

## **2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY**

The overall quality of the provision in mathematics and numeracy is inadequate.

In the FS, the children have an appropriate understanding of simple number bonds, and can sort data using Carroll and Venn diagrams. The teachers make good use of ICT to support the development of the children's skills and understanding in numeracy; for example, using programmable devices and mathematical software. Learning themes, such as favourite pets, are integrated well within numeracy tasks. Overall, the children's use of early mathematical language is underdeveloped and there is insufficient use of appropriately challenging practical activities and interesting resources to support learning.

At KS1, the children have a breadth of mathematical experience and a majority are able to explain their work. In discussions with the children, the most able spoke confidently and positively about their mathematical experiences. They had a good understanding of number, shape and space, measures and could use appropriate mental mathematics strategies for basic addition and subtraction.

Across KS2, there is insufficient progression in the children's acquisition of skills and knowledge in numeracy and, by the end of KS2, the standards in mathematics are too low. In discussions with the year 7 children, the more able have a satisfactory understanding of number facts, place value and measures; however, their ability to think flexibly and use mathematics in meaningful real-life contexts is not sufficiently developed. The teachers need to promote and develop greater flexibility in the children's mathematical thinking through, for example, using open-ended searching questions and providing more opportunities for children to engage in investigative work.

The framework for the systematic development of the children's mental mathematics skills throughout the school is inadequate. The numeracy co-ordinator, who is new to the post, has identified appropriately the need to review and develop the long-term planning for numeracy to ensure continuity and progression in learning across the mathematics curriculum. The inspection findings confirm that this is an important area for development.

## **3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING**

### **3.1 PLANNING**

The teacher's medium-term and short-term planning is inadequate in meeting the needs of all of the children within the composite classes, particularly those experiencing difficulties with aspects of their learning. At KS1, the planning and use of resources for play-based learning is also inadequate. The teachers need to evaluate reflectively the impact of their work on the outcomes for the children, and use these evaluations to inform their planning for future lessons.



### 3.2 TEACHING

The quality of the teaching in the lessons observed during the inspection ranged from very good to inadequate; while teaching in a minority of the lessons was good, in a majority it was satisfactory with significant areas for improvement. At the time of the inspection a high proportion of the teachers were substitute teachers or on temporary contracts.

In the more effective practice, previous learning was reviewed appropriately, the children's own experiences and interests were built upon effectively, and the children were encouraged to think and solve problems. In the less effective practice, the classroom routines and management of learning were poor, previous learning was not built upon effectively, the learning was not matched closely enough to the ability of all of the children, the learning activities were not sufficiently challenging, and there was a lack of use of interesting and practical resources to reinforce key concepts. In these lessons, the more able children were not challenged sufficiently and the less able children achieved poor outcomes. Consequently, the children displayed low levels of interest and some became unsettled, resulting in poor behaviour.

The quality of most of the teaching requires significant improvement, and in particular the teachers need to match the learning, and associated learning and teaching strategies, more closely to the needs and abilities of all of the children.

### 3.3 ASSESSMENT

The teachers have begun to share learning intentions and success criteria with the children. The children's work is marked regularly with supportive comments. In the best practice, in a minority of the classes, the teachers provide the children with helpful constructive feedback on how to improve their work, particularly in literacy. However, assessment for learning is underdeveloped.

There are appropriate procedures in place for keeping the parents informed about their child's progress. Over the past five years, standardised assessment tests have been used to assess the children's progress. This assessment data is collated centrally, and the co-ordinator, who has taken on this role recently, has begun to track the progress of cohorts of children. She has also identified appropriately the need to develop the effective use of the available data to inform whole-school self-evaluation, and to track the progress of individual children to identify underachievement. The inspection findings confirm that this is an important area for development in order to improve the quality of the provision and raise standards.

### 3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The overall quality of provision for special educational needs (SEN) is inadequate.

The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) knows the children well and liaises with the parents, the teachers and external agencies. She maintains the SEN register and the children's individual education plans (IEPs). The IEPs are written by the SENCO in consultation with the class teacher and they are reviewed regularly. However, in the majority of cases the current provision does not address adequately the specific learning needs of the child. The SENCO needs to make better use of diagnostic assessments and consider the advice of external support agencies, where appropriate, in drawing up clear and measurable short-term targets suited to the specific learning and/or behavioural needs of each child and to track their progress. In addition, the Principal and the SENCO need to agree criteria for the early identification of, and intervention for, those children in the FS who require additional support.

The SENCO, who works two days per week, provides satisfactory support for almost all of the children on the SEN register through short withdrawal sessions. The main intervention strategy identified for additional support is the use of differentiated learning activities in class. However, in the lessons observed during the inspection, the activities were not sufficiently differentiated to meet the children's needs or ensure progression in their learning. Overall, the current provision lacks rigour and cohesion and does not provide sufficiently for the varied needs of the children and ensure that they make appropriate progress.

#### **4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

##### **4.1 LEADERSHIP**

The overall quality of leadership and management is inadequate.

The Principal has been in post for five years. She has developed a range of policies to guide the work of the school, and has worked hard to improve the quality of the physical learning environment. Over the past four years there have been significant staff changes and, as a result, whole-school co-ordinating roles and responsibilities have been reviewed and reorganised recently.

However, the strategic leadership of the school is inadequate. Staff changes, a high proportion of substitute teachers over recent years, low morale among the staff, and the dissatisfaction of a significant minority of the parents, has resulted in a lack of focus on improving key areas of the provision including literacy and numeracy. The Principal and staff need to develop good professional working relationships, improve internal communication and give priority to improving the quality of learning and teaching, and raising standards in order to meet more effectively the needs of all of the children.

##### **4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT**

The school's process for improvement is linked to a SDP that complies with the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005. The governors are involved actively in, and kept informed about, the SDP process; however, they need to inform themselves more fully of the standards within the school. At a whole-school level, although the performance of the children in literacy and numeracy is benchmarked and targets are set, there is insufficient identification of underperformance or of the key strategic actions required to raise attainment; these targets need to be based on a rigorous assessment of the children's achievements and standards and the associated action plans need to be more specific and measurable.

The Principal, co-ordinators and teachers need to work together more effectively to monitor and evaluate the quality of the provision for, and standards of, the children's learning. Collectively, they need to develop a more critical and reflective approach towards self-evaluation with a sharper focus on learning and teaching, to help ensure that the children achieve the standards of which they are capable.

Given the complexities outlined in this report the Principal and governors will require external support to address the issues. In order to assist the governors to address the issues, the Inspectorate recommends that DE exercises its power under Article 14 of the Education (NI) Order, 1998, to appoint additional voting members, with appropriate experience and expertise, to the governing body.

#### 4.3 STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The staff development programme is linked appropriately to the SDP and, in particular, to the needs of co-ordinators who have recently taken on new roles and responsibilities. The Principal now needs to empower and support the co-ordinators to develop their capacity to fulfil their roles more effectively.

#### 4.4 ACCOMMODATION

The quality of the available accommodation is good and the standard of caretaking in the school is excellent. Issues relating to the accommodation are detailed in the Appendix.

### 5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the attractive school environment;
- the positive attitude of most of the children who interact and work well with others;
- the good working relationships between most of the teachers and the children; and
- the hardworking Principal and staff who demonstrate a commitment to the work and life of the school.

5.2 The areas for improvement include the need:

- for the Principal and staff, supported by the governors, to work together to build effective working relationships, improve internal communication and raise the low morale, all of which are impacting negatively on the school's pastoral and curricular provision and on the experiences and outcomes for the children;
- to improve the overall quality of learning and teaching, matching the work to the needs and abilities of all of the children in order to raise standards in literacy and numeracy; and
- to improve the inadequate leadership at all levels, in particular revising the SDP and associated targets in line with the inspection findings, and developing a more critical and reflective approach towards self-evaluation as a means of leading towards improvement.

In almost all of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is inadequate; the areas for improvement significantly outweigh the strengths in the provision. The inspection has identified major areas for improvement in standards, learning and teaching, leadership and management, which need to be addressed urgently if the school is to meet effectively the needs of all of the children.

It will be important that the employing authority, 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.

The Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement, over a 12-18 month period.

### **ACCOMMODATION**

- There is a lack of indoor play facilities.
- There is a lack of canteen facilities.

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