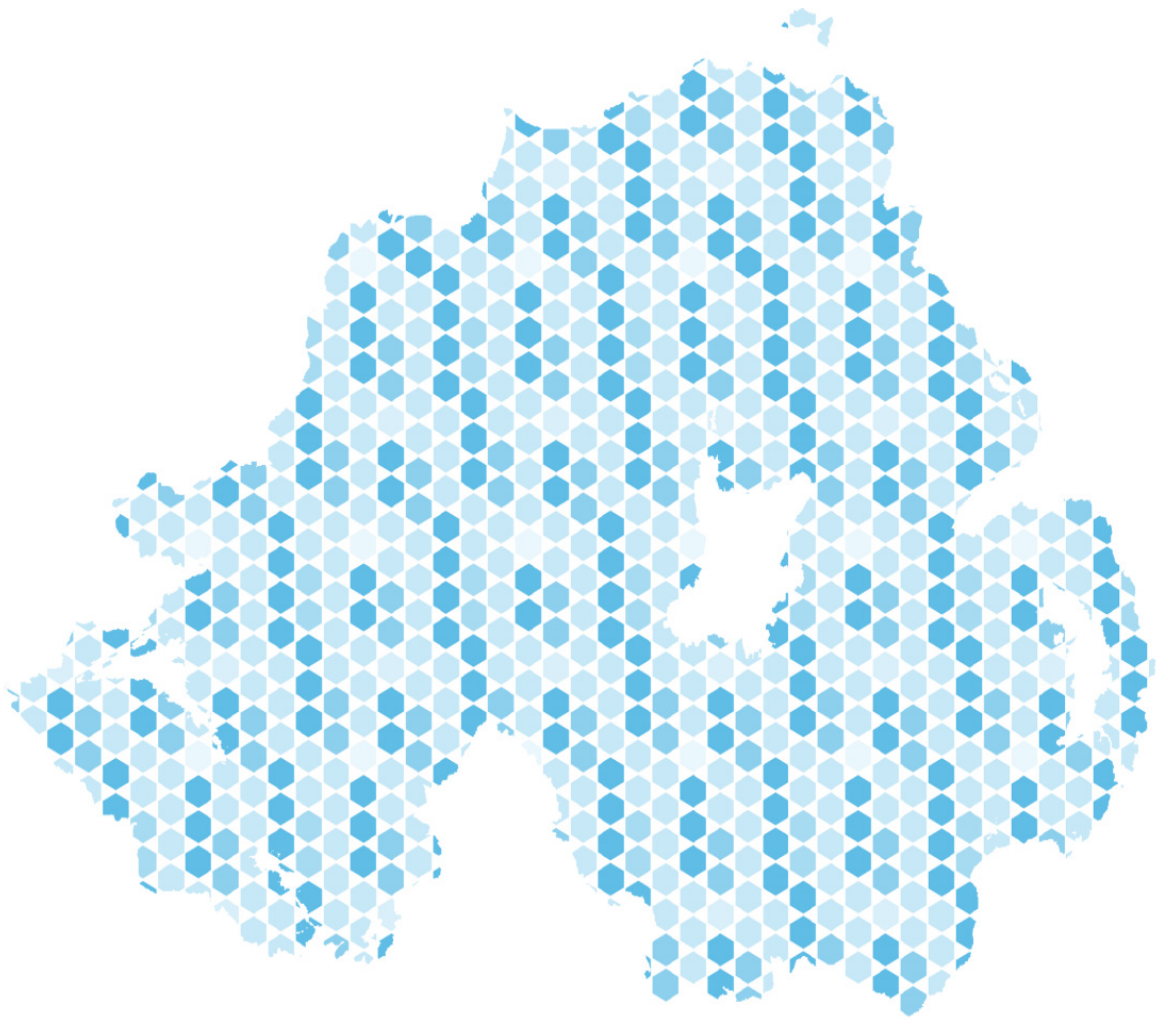


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Malvern Primary School,
Belfast

Report of an Inspection
in March 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

BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Malvern Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 26/03/12**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 101-6498** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Year 1 Intake	22	22	20	16	25
Enrolments					
Primary	116	116	113	108	119
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): 91.7% **NI Avg Att: 94.7%**

Average Attendance for those children on the
 Special Educational Needs Register: 93.7%

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): 7.48 0 0 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)

ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 19.8 NI PTR: 20.2

iii. Average Class Size: 20

iv. Class Size (Range): 17 to 25

v. Ancillary Support:

Number of Hours Per Week:	i. Clerical support:	35
	ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support:	40
	iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support:	96

vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 5.04%

vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 54%

viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0

ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 78%

x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2010/11 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics, and Irish (in Irish-medium schools):	English 45.45%	Mathematics 63.64%	Irish N/A
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT

Malvern Primary School is a co-educational, controlled school situated in west Belfast. Almost all of the children come from the immediate vicinity of the Lower Shankill area. The enrolment has remained steady in recent years and stands currently at 119. At the time of the inspection, around 78% of the children were entitled to free school meals. The school has identified approximately 54% of the children as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning, including around 5% who have statements of special educational needs.

Malvern Primary School has participated in the Belfast Education and Library Board's (BELB) Achieving Belfast programme for four years. Achieving Belfast is a long-term, sustained intervention whose aim is to address under-achievement and improve educational outcomes and standards in schools. The school was identified based on a range of factors, including educational attainment that is well below the Belfast area board average at the end of key stage (KS) 2, and the high number of children coming from areas of multiple social disadvantage.

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. In addition, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) held meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors), a representative group of children from year 6 and children from years 5 to 7, as representatives of the school council.

Ninety-eight questionnaires were issued to the parents; 22% were returned to the Inspection Services Branch (ISB) and seven contained additional written comments. Most of the responses were positive; the parents highlighted the caring ethos, the professional commitment of all of the staff to address the social and educational needs of the children and the Principal's supportive leadership.

Six of the teachers and six members of the support staff responded to the online questionnaires. The responses highlighted the importance which the staff place on teamwork and on providing the children with a safe and nurturing learning environment and the development of their learning experiences.

The governors expressed their commitment to, and support for, the work of the school. They commended the Principal's leadership, the very good working relationships at all levels, the dedicated staff, the good standards of behaviour demonstrated by the children and the importance of the school to the local community of the Lower Shankill area. The governors reported that the Principal and staff keep them well informed about the developments in the school.

The children, in year 6, spoke confidently and positively of their experiences at school, in particular, their friendships in the classes, their access to a good range of sporting activities and their enjoyment of lessons. The school council representatives commented enthusiastically about their ideas for improving their learning environment and the development of their personal attributes, for example their team-working skills. The children know where to seek help if they have a concern about their safety.

The inspectors reported to the Principal and representatives of the governors the views emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the primary school is good. The teaching and non-teaching staff develop the children's self-esteem and celebrate their achievements. During the inspection, the quality of the working relationships observed between the children and the staff were mutually respectful, caring and supportive. The children's behaviour was very good. Their work and achievements are recognised through a whole school reward system, assemblies and in displays of photographs of sporting and drama events. The Principal and staff consult well with the children about school life, for example, through the school council. The 'prefect system' develops the KS2 children as good role models for the younger children and ensures they make a valuable input to the life and work of the school. The children's learning and social development are enhanced through visits to places of educational interest.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has very good and comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding the 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; for example, through the promotion of healthy fruit breaks, the provision of a breakfast club, the outdoor physical play activities, and the involvement of the children in sport which encourages the children to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

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. The school encourages the parents to become involved in the education of their children, for example, through the 'Families and Schools Together' (FAST)

programme. Valuable links have been established with a range of external educational agencies to support the children identified with additional needs. In addition, the school has established a good link with the local Sure Start group. The governors and school staff seek the views of the children and the parents in a systematic manner through, for example, questionnaires regarding the quality of the provision.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

Almost all the children work well in class and display high levels of motivation. They demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and show enjoyment in their achievements. In the best practice, the children work collaboratively in pairs and groups, each child taking his/her role within the group with willingness and confidence. The classroom assistants provide valuable learning support to the children who require the sensitive development of their skills of perseverance, and the reinforcement of core literacy and numeracy skills.

An analysis of the KS2^{*} assessment data indicates that in English and mathematics, over the past four years, the school's performance is significantly below the Northern Ireland (NI) average. When compared with schools in the same free school meals category, the children's levels of attainment fall well below the average in both English and mathematics.

The children in year 4 and year 7 are entered for the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) Information Technology (IT) Accreditation Scheme and they achieve satisfactory levels of attainment.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

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

Throughout the foundation stage (FS) and KS1, the children's talking and listening skills are developed through effective teacher questioning during play activities, and through shared or guided reading and writing sessions. By the end of KS2, most of the children express their ideas well during class discussion, especially related to their topic work and mathematics, and they reach satisfactory standards; this practice needs to be disseminated across all of the classes.

There is variation in the quality of the teaching of reading and in the standards the children achieve across the ability range. In the FS and KS1, the children acquire basic reading skills through the development of phonological awareness and through shared and guided reading experiences. There are, however, in the FS and KS1, insufficient opportunities provided for most of the children to develop a good level of understanding of text. The low standards attained in the children's reading need to be improved; it is essential that the teachers provide the children with daily opportunities to practise and develop their reading and that they focus more clearly on a range of successful strategies to raise attainment in reading. This is an urgent priority.

The children in KS2 benefit significantly from a consistent and challenging approach to develop their reading for understanding and their reading skills across other areas of learning. The teachers make good use of the topic work to develop the children's research skills and motivate the children to read for research and pleasure. It is appropriate that the

* 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.

literacy action plan identifies the development of a whole-school approach to improving the children's levels of understanding. It will be important for the senior leadership team and literacy co-ordinator to monitor more rigorously the acquisition and application of the children's reading skills within and across the classes in order to plan appropriate and coherent programmes to raise the standards of reading.

In the FS and KS1, the children are beginning to experiment with letter, word and sentence formation through play-based activities and topic work. There are insufficient opportunities for the children to express their ideas independently in writing and to write with a better quality of presentation and accuracy of spelling. As they progress through KS2, the children extend their writing styles and have satisfactory opportunities to write for a variety of purposes including descriptions, instructions and poems. They engage in revising and editing their own work, using ICT where appropriate. The quality, range, and standard of the children's writing in their books vary from good to inadequate across and within the key stages. The school's current focus on tracking more closely the developmental progress of the children's standards of writing is necessary to ensure they become more confident and competent writers and achieve higher standards across all key stages.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The overall quality of the provision for mathematics and numeracy is satisfactory.

The programme for mathematics provides the children with a wide range of experiences in number, shape and space, measures and data handling. In the FS, the children have good opportunities to develop mathematical language and ideas through play-based learning. In KS1, the teachers continue to make use of a range of practical equipment to develop the children's understanding of important concepts such as place value and fractions. In KS2, the teachers set high expectations for the children's mathematical knowledge, understanding and skills, and the children work conscientiously to meet these expectations. The teachers use effective questioning to challenge and extend the children's thinking and use real contexts to enable the children to apply their mathematical knowledge and to solve problems. The children have frequent opportunities to write about their mathematical thinking and to use mathematics across the curriculum. A scheme of work for mental mathematics enables the teachers to plan for, and develop, effective progression of the children's strategies for mental mathematics. The very good practice observed in KS2, where the children are frequently encouraged to explain the mathematical reasoning behind their answers, needs to be applied more consistently across the school.

The mathematics co-ordinator provides good leadership and she supports effectively her colleagues in implementing the agreed teaching strategies. A good start has been made in monitoring and evaluating the quality and effectiveness of the planning, learning and teaching of mathematics across the school to improve the low standards. Currently, the scheme of work for numeracy is being revised; this process, and the resulting documentation, provides useful guidance to class teachers in order to aid medium and short term planning, ensuring continuity and progression in the children's learning.

During the inspection, the highest attaining children in years 4 and 7 demonstrated their ability to think mathematically across most areas of the numeracy programme and to talk with some confidence about their mathematical understanding. By the end of KS2, although all of the children attain in line with their ability or above expectation, the standards in mathematics remain low.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The teachers evaluate regularly the comprehensive, medium-term plans and overviews. Although the planning contains good cross-curricular links, it does not take sufficient account of the children's individual needs and progress, if the standards are to be raised.

3.2 TEACHING

During the inspection, the quality of the teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to very good; a majority of the teaching was good or very good, with a significant minority of the lessons being satisfactory.

In the best practice, the teachers provided meaningful contexts for learning and built on the prior knowledge of the children. The lessons were well structured, contained a good degree of challenge and were conducted at a suitable pace. The teachers had appropriately high expectations and engaged all of the children in suitable learning activities.

Where the teaching was less successful, the work was not well matched to the needs and abilities of the children. The learning to be achieved lacked a clear focus and there was an over-emphasis on tasks that did not stimulate the interest or curiosity of the children.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The school uses a range of standardised tests to measure the children's attainment, to set targets and to determine intervention programmes to address low and under-achievement. The test results are complemented with moderated samples of the children's class work, representing their ongoing progress in literacy and numeracy. The assessment of the children's progress in reading requires further development in order to inform learning and teaching, and to raise the standards achieved by all of the children. In the FS, the staff have begun to record their observations of the children's learning. These observations, however, do not focus clearly enough on the learning or inform short-term planning.

In KS1 and KS2, most of the children's work is marked supportively. In the best practice, the teachers give clear guidance to the children on how to improve the quality and presentation of their written work. There are appropriate procedures and records in place for keeping the parents informed about their child's progress; this includes written reports and formal parent-teacher consultations. In addition, informal contacts between the teachers and parents are arranged as the need arises. The annual written reports are prepared to a high standard by the class teachers and provide the parents with a comprehensive evaluation of their children's progress and attainment.

3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The school has identified about 54% of the children as having special educational needs; around 5% have a statement of educational need. The majority of these children are at stages 2 or 3 of the Code of Practice. The children present with a wide range of diverse needs. Most of the children on the SEN register experience mild or moderate learning difficulties and a significant minority have social, emotional and behavioural challenges.

The school has put in place a comprehensive series of support mechanisms to tackle the barriers to learning which the children experience including small class sizes. In the main, the children requiring help are withdrawn from class for group literacy support provided by the special needs and Achieving Belfast teachers. In addition, the children with specific

language or behavioural challenges are taught by peripatetic teachers from the BELB Outreach Services and from Clarawood Support Services. In order to improve the children's emotional literacy, the school has instigated a programme to manage issues of anger management and conflict resolution. The school has a large number of classroom assistants who make a valuable contribution to the children's progress.

The individual education plans (IEP) set out realistic steps and strategies to assist the children in accessing the curriculum in a thoughtful manner. The children's progress is evaluated regularly by the special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) along with the class and support teachers.

Few children have been discontinued from the special needs register, and for most, progress is slow and less than satisfactory; sustained and further intensive support is required. The school needs to consider the introduction of more targeted and intensive reading sessions in order to raise the children's levels of basic literacy. In addition, it will be important for senior management to monitor more effectively the current arrangements for SEN to ensure that they are fit for purpose.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The overall quality of leadership and management is inadequate.

The Principal, who has been in post for seven years, is also the SENCO providing In-class support. She has established a strong team spirit, improved working relationships and increased staff morale. The Principal has overseen substantial improvements in the accommodation. Under her guidance, the school has reached out to the parents and involved them more fully in the education of their children. The Principal addresses effectively the pastoral, emotional and behavioural needs of the children. It will be important for the Principal, along with the senior management team and the co-ordinators, to provide firmer curricular leadership that focuses more sharply on the provision made for all of the children and on raising the low standards achieved by many.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

Although the school's development plan gives good attention to, and meets the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005, it is not based on high quality, whole school self-evaluation. The associated action plans are appropriate, but they need to be taken forward in a strategic manner if improvements in standards are to be effected.

4.3 ACCOMMODATION

The school makes good use of its accommodation. The school is well maintained; the standard of caretaking and cleaning is very good. A strong feature of the school is its enhanced learning environment to support the children's learning.

4.4 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The governors are committed to supporting the school and consider it to be vitally important to the local community of the Lower Shankill area. It will be important for the Board of Governors to support the Principal and senior management team to ensure that better strategic direction is given to improving the quality of learning and teaching and in raising the standards of achievement of all of the children. The school has a large, historical, budgetary deficit.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the generally good standards of behaviour;
- the good team spirit engendered among all the staff and the valuable contribution made by the classroom assistants to develop the children's learning;
- the good quality of the pastoral care which places particular emphasis on supporting and developing the social and emotional well being of the children;
- the good use made of the accommodation and the enhanced learning environment to support the children's learning; and
- the good standards achieved by the children in ICT.

5.2 The areas for improvement include the need to:

- improve the quality of the teaching of reading throughout the school in order to raise the low standards achieved by the children;
- provide a more strategic approach to the provision of SEN to ensure that the learning needs of all of the children are met; and
- improve the inadequate leadership and management by monitoring and evaluating learning and teaching rigorously to inform improvement in provision and outcomes.

In almost all of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is inadequate; the areas for improvement outweigh the strengths in the provision. The inspection has identified significant areas for improvement in standards, in learning and teaching, and in leadership and management, which need to be addressed urgently if the school is to meet effectively the needs of all of the children. The school will require well-focused, external support to take forward the areas identified for improvement.

HEALTH AND SAFETY APPENDIX

- The double gate in the playground is not secured during playtimes.

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