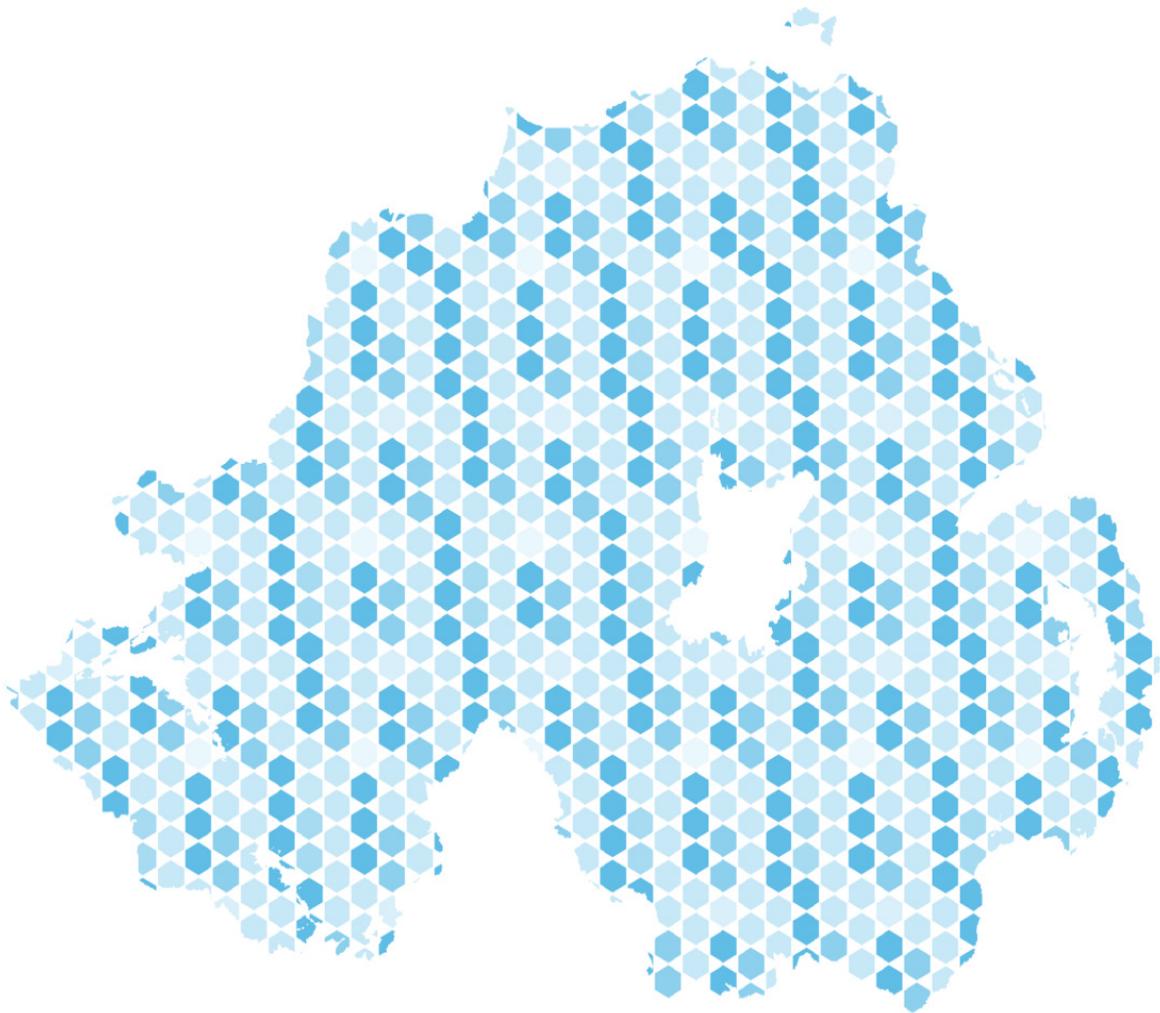


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Meadow Bridge Primary
School, Hillsborough

Report of an Inspection
in June 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

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Meadow Bridge Primary School is situated in a pleasant rural site between Hillsborough and Moira. The majority of the children travel to school by bus or car. The enrolment of the school has fluctuated over the past three years and currently stands at 230 children. The school reports that approximately two percent of the children are entitled to free school meals. The school has identified approximately 14% of the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning.

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 a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and a group of the children from year 6.

Almost 52% of parental questionnaires were returned to the Inspection Services Branch and 35 contained additional written comments. A majority of the comments reflected very favourably on the approachability of the Principal and teaching staff; attention was also drawn to the friendly, compassionate and supportive ethos of the school.

Ten of the teaching staff and six members of the support staff responded to the online questionnaires. Six teachers supplied additional comments all of which were very positive in particular about the camaraderie and team spirit that exists among the staff.

The governors spoke very positively about the happy, inclusive ethos of the school, and their appreciation of the work of the school and the commitment of the Principal and staff to the children.

The children in year 6 spoke articulately about the support provided by their teachers and the classroom assistants, the reward system within the school and their enjoyment of activities both inside and outside of the classroom. They are fully aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety and well-being.

An analysis of the questionnaires and the written comments was shared with the Principal and the governors.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The Vice-principal, who is responsible for pastoral care, gives highly effective leadership, with a clear focus on the children's personal and social development. The teachers promote and reward positive behaviour through their application of a wide range of strategies and rewards. There are high levels of inclusion throughout the school, with all of the children fully integrated in the learning within the classes. The older children have good opportunities to develop their roles and responsibilities through their involvement in the playground buddy system. The children's learning and social development are enhanced further through regular visits to the school by groups and speakers, the range of extra-curricular activities, opportunities to participate in outside competitions and school trips. The school has identified the need to take more account of the views of the children in decision-making within the school. The children's behaviour during the inspection was exemplary.

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. This is highlighted in initiatives such as Healthy Handy Break and in the wide range of sporting opportunities available to children. Together these encourage children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The school informs parents of special events through the distribution of the weekly newsletter which is also available through the school's website. There are effective links with the local playgroup to ensure that the children make a good start to their primary education. The children benefit from the links within the community and with the local special and post-primary schools. The Parent Teacher Association has helped raise funds to purchase resources such as Interactive White Boards and sporting equipment.

There are appropriate procedures for keeping the parents well informed about their children's progress, for example, written reports, and two formal parent-teacher consultations. The annual written reports for parents provide the necessary information about their children's progress and the standards they reach.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

The children are highly motivated to learn; they settle quickly to their work demonstrating very good organisational skills, levels of independence and engagement in their learning. They work well collaboratively in pairs and small groups.

The children who receive additional support with their learning make good progress. These include children with learning difficulties in literacy and numeracy, and a small number who have special educational needs of a behavioural nature. The school development plan (SDP) has identified appropriately the need for early identification of the children's needs through classroom observation and the analysis of assessment data. The children's learning

is effectively supported by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) in withdrawal sessions. She is working closely with teachers to support them in writing their own individual education plans (IEPs). The SENCO needs to monitor and evaluate the quality and implementation of the IEPs to help raise further the standards achieved by those who receive additional support with their learning.

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data shows that in three of the past four years, in English and mathematics, the school's performance is consistently well above the Northern Ireland average. Similarly, the levels of attainment in English and mathematics are well above the average when compared with schools in the same free schools meals category.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The quality of the provision for English and literacy is good.

The Literacy co-ordinator has been leading a literacy team within the school this year. The team has produced a comprehensive literacy policy and a handwriting policy. However, the current action plan for the development of literacy has not been based on effective self-evaluation and there is no strategic overview on how to ensure the progressive development of literacy within the school. There are no long-term plans to guide the teachers in the teaching of literacy. The senior management team (SMT) and the literacy team need to develop a more strategic approach to self-evaluation and planning in literacy to bring about further improvement.

Across key stages almost all of the children have very good oral communication skills and speak confidently to peers, teachers and other adults.

A major focus in literacy this year has been the implementation of a new phonics programme across all classes. The teachers have worked hard to create interesting and challenging phonic activities for children to complete both at home and in school. An information workshop for parents was facilitated by a South-Eastern Education and Library Board Officer. The literacy team have highlighted the need to provide further workshops for parents as the phonics programme becomes established in the school.

The majority of the children achieve good standards in reading. Across the year groups the children benefit from a range of approaches to reading, including shared, modelled and guided reading. By the end of KS2 a majority of the children are reading at a level above that which is appropriate for their age. The school has implemented a 'Reading partnership' programme, using two enthusiastic classroom assistants, to provide support for those children in year 3 and 4 identified as needing additional help. All of the children receiving the support have made progress and the co-ordinator has received positive feedback from parents, teachers and the children themselves about its success.

During the inspection, groups of children from years 4 and 7 read with fluency, expression and understanding. The children were very enthusiastic about reading; they were able to discuss their text preferences, favourite authors and characters. Reading is promoted positively in the school through interesting World Book Day events, timetabled silent reading time and the annual book fair. It is important that the literacy team ensures that the planned audit of reading resources is carried out and that it includes the views of the children about the reading materials used and their attitudes towards reading.

The standards attained by the children in writing are very good. Across the key stages the children experience a wide variety of writing activities across a range of genres. A particular strength in the literacy provision is the opportunity provided for the children in KS2 to develop and use their skills in talking, listening, reading and writing in meaningful contexts across the curriculum through the very effective use of ICT. These include the creation of power point presentations, photo-stories and websites which other classes are given opportunities to view. As part of their work on the topic of the Victorians, the year 7 scripted, performed and filmed an excerpt from 'Oliver Twist' which was of a very high quality.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The quality of provision for mathematics and numeracy is very good.

The numeracy co-ordinator provides very effective leadership. She leads well the ongoing development of whole-school numeracy which is informed by very good self-evaluation. Under her direction, the school is using a range of quantitative data available for mathematics including, standardised tests and key stage bench-marked data to inform the future planning for learning and teaching. Appropriate areas of the mathematics provision for further development are identified, in particular, the sharper use of the quantitative data to indicate and address underachievement and further improve the overall very good provision.

The children experience a well-planned mathematics programme which covers a range of mathematical content and skills. The teachers use a variety of strategies and resources to support the development of the children's skills in mental calculations. In all of the key stages, there was a good balance between the written and practical work which provided many opportunities for the children to develop a sound understanding of number and number operations, measures and shape and space. The lessons observed frequently developed the children's investigative skills and promoted flexible ways of thinking and solving problems. In the best practice, learning was often connected well to other areas of the curriculum including the World Around Us and literacy. In a minority of the classes, ICT supports effectively the learning, with teachers making good use of computer programmes, programmable devices and a range of websites to support the learning and teaching in mathematics. This very good practice needs to be disseminated.

In KS2, there was an effective exchange of mathematical ideas between the children, accompanied by an appropriate use of and a good development of mathematical language. In discussions with the year 7 children, they demonstrated a very good understanding of place value, estimation, measures, the properties of shapes, and were flexible in their mathematical thinking. In a minority of lessons observed, the work did not cater sufficiently for the varying abilities of the children and, the children had insufficient opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning and work in groups or pairs to complement the very good whole-class teaching that took place.

By the end of KS2, most of the children reach very good standards, and a minority reach outstanding standards.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The school has identified the need to develop the planning to provide an effective framework for progression and to ensure coherence in the children's learning. Teachers plan in respective year groups and a good start has been made to connecting all areas of the curriculum through thematic topics. The teachers evaluate their planning regularly. In

the best practice, these evaluations are focused on the needs of groups and individuals within the class and are used effectively to inform future planning to meet the requirements of all the children. This good practice needs to be consistent across the school.

3.2 TEACHING

The quality of the teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding with three-quarters being good or better.

In the most effective practice, there was a clear sharing of learning intentions and success criteria and the lessons were well paced and purposeful. Through effective questioning, the teachers challenged the children's thinking, deepened their understanding of key concepts and promoted the development of their oral literacy. Appropriate differentiation was also in evidence and the learning was often linked to the children's experiences.

In the less effective practice observed, the lessons were too teacher directed, learning intentions were unclear or not shared with the children and there was a lack of pace

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The school has collated a range of performance data, including analysis of standardised tests and DE bench-marking information which informs whole-school target-setting. In the best practice the analysis of data is used by the teachers to inform the teaching and learning. There is a need for an assessment policy to guide the work across the school, identify progress and address learning needs.

The teachers mark the children's written work regularly. The marking is at its most effective when the teachers provide detailed written feedback, give appropriate praise for good work and allow the children to correct any mistakes. This good practice needs to be more consistent across the school. In a minority of lessons, the children are encouraged to engage in peer-evaluation and self-evaluation of their learning.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory.

The Principal has been in post from the formation of the school. He has set a positive tone for the work of the school through his effective working relationships with the children, staff, governors and the parents and with a range of outside agencies to support the children's learning. He fosters an inclusive whole-school ethos based on mutual respect and is strongly supportive of the welfare of all of the staff and the children. He is supported very well by his Vice-principal. The SMT discuss the priorities of the SDP and other members of staff may join the SMT at relevant times. However, there is a lack of a robust strategic overview of the work of the school. The SMT now needs to formalise and further develop the self-evaluation and monitoring procedures within the school in order to evaluate more consistently the quality of learning and teaching and to inform the SDP process.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The SDP is compliant with the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005. However, most of the action plans are not sufficiently focused on teaching and learning and do not identify clearly the strategies through which the targets will be realised.

4.3 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The school governors ensure that all aspects of the life and work of the school are kept under review. The school is currently running a substantial budgetary deficit which needs to be addressed urgently by all concerned parties.

4.4 ACCOMMODATION

The school building and surrounding grounds are maintained to a high standard and provide a pleasant working environment for the staff and children.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the very good quality of the pastoral care provided for the children;
- the exemplary behaviour of the children who are highly motivated and display enjoyment in their learning;
- the very good standards achieved by the children in literacy and numeracy;
- the quality of the teaching observed, three quarters of which was good or better; and
- the inclusive ethos that provides all the children with access to a broad and balanced curriculum.

5.2 The area for improvement is the need:

- for SMT to develop a more strategic approach to self-evaluation and school development planning in order to plan for, implement and evaluate the impact of actions to bring about further improvement.

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 an area for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address.

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