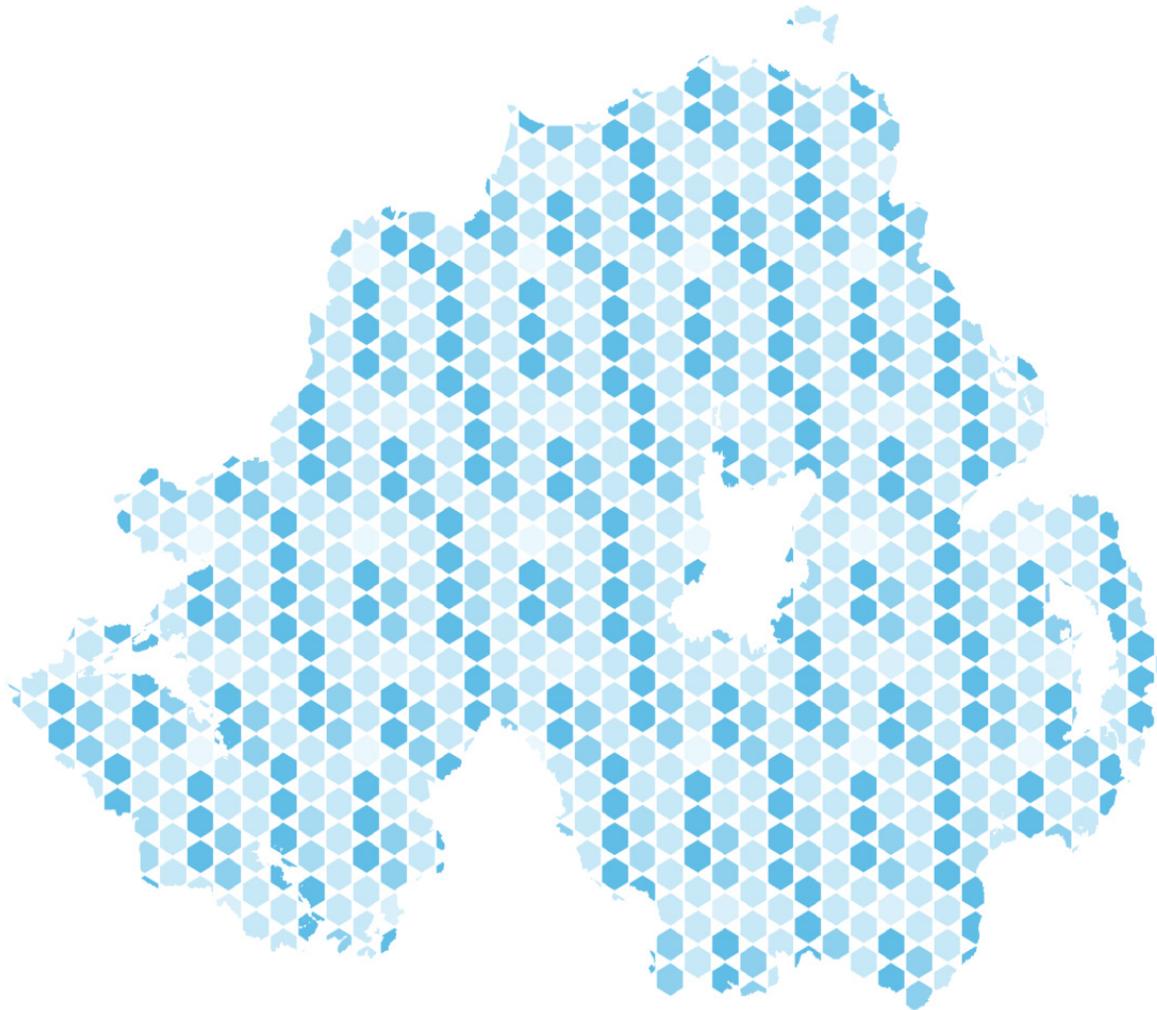


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Orchard County Primary
School, Portadown

Report of an Inspection
in November 2010

eti

*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*

Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



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

Orchard County Primary School is situated on the Blackisland Road in Annaghmore. The school is the amalgamation of Annaghmore and Tullyroan Primary Schools and opened in a new building in 2005. The enrolment has increased steadily over the past five years and currently stands at 121, including 13 children of reception age. Almost all of the children who attend the school come from the surrounding area. Approximately 9% of the children are entitled to free school meals. The school has identified just under 20% of the children as requiring 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, 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.

Sixty-one percent of parental questionnaires were returned to Inspection Services Branch and 23 returns included additional written comments. The parents expressed a very high level of satisfaction with the educational and pastoral provision in the school. In particular, they acknowledged the caring and supportive environment, the commitment of the staff to the care and well being of the children, the good standing of the school in the community and the range of additional learning experiences provided for the children. In addition, a small number of the parents took the opportunity to meet with the inspectors during the inspection. They expressed their very high regard for the work of the school in general, and its teachers and Principal in particular.

The very few issues raised through the questionnaires were shared with the Principal and the governors.

All of the teachers and six members of the support staff responded to the online questionnaires with eight providing additional written comments. All of these responses were very positive and highly affirmative of the work of the school. In particular, the staff highlighted their enjoyment of working in the school, the happy, friendly environment and the support provided by the Principal.

The governors expressed their appreciation of the support for the school among parents and within the local community. They commented positively on the leadership of the Principal who, among other things, ensures that they are provided with pertinent information which helps them carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively, the dedication and hard work of the staff and the children's achievements and standards.

In discussions, the children in year 6 reported that they feel very safe and secure and are aware of what to do if they have concerns about their safety or well-being.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is outstanding. The working relationships at all levels are excellent and the staff take cognisance of the individual needs of all the children. As a result of the inclusive, supportive child-centred ethos, the children are confident and welcoming, they take pride in their school and their behaviour is exemplary. There is an effective whole-school approach to promoting and rewarding positive behaviour. The children participate in an extensive range of extra-curricular activities which support and enrich very well their learning and social experiences. Their involvement in the mini-enterprise and ECO committee contributes significantly to the personal and social development of the older children who carry out their responsibilities with maturity and great enthusiasm.

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.

1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives outstanding attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. The year 7 children manage the school's 'fruit direct' mini-enterprise programme which encourages healthy eating, the school makes effective use of its website to encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles and this message is also promoted in learning and teaching across the curriculum.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The links with the parents and the local community are strongly focused on supporting and enhancing the children's learning. Effective curricular links have been established recently with two local primary schools providing a forum to share good practice and contribute to the professional development of staff. There is appropriate liaison with outside agencies working with the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning.

Communication with the parents is maintained through regular newsletters, curriculum and progress meetings and the very informative, accessible school website. There is an active Parent Teacher Association which provides additional support and resources and is an integral part of the school community.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

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

The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning make very good progress in line with their ability.

The children are highly motivated and demonstrate very good levels of independence, confidence and enjoyment in their learning. They organise themselves well and present their work neatly. They interact confidently with their teachers and their peers, show initiative in their learning and seek help when needed. The children demonstrate very good competence in their use of ICT.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

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

The literacy co-ordinator is effective in her role of leading and monitoring the provision and has identified appropriate areas for improvement for the ongoing development of literacy throughout the school. Increasingly, better analysis is being undertaken of the performance data to identify and make provision for any children who are at risk of under-achieving.

The teachers provide a rich literacy environment which supports very well the children's language development. The children are confident in expressing themselves orally and engage willingly with a variety of audiences. The experiences of the children and their competences are developed further through valuable opportunities to perform at school assemblies and productions for the parents.

The children develop their reading skills systematically as they progress through the school. A linguistic phonics element is applied consistently throughout the school and complements the school's reading programme. By the end of KS2, most of the children reach standards in reading in line with their ability and, for a significant minority, the standards are very good. Most of the children enjoy reading and are able to talk enthusiastically about their favourite books and authors. In developing the reading programme further, the school needs to consider the value of the novel in individual and group contexts to widen further the children's reading experiences.

The children develop their writing skills through well-devised sessions in which they are encouraged to take risks and to try things for themselves. This is particularly evident in the foundation stage (FS), where the children are provided with a suitable range of resources to experiment with early writing, forming letters and writing for a purpose. As they progress through KS1, the children are able to write increasingly extensively and, quite appropriately, based on their own personal experiences. In KS2, the children develop their writing through a range of genre, including poetry, story writing and individual projects involving personal research. By the end of KS2, the children complete a good range of writing to good standards. To enhance the children's writing further, the school needs to review its use of worksheets and decontextualised grammar exercises in some instances, both of which constrain the children's independent writing experiences.

Within the classrooms and in the ICT cluster area, the children work very competently and co-operatively on programs which complement and support their work in literacy.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

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

The numeracy co-ordinator provides very good leadership and is committed to the ongoing development of the provision for numeracy and mathematics, which is prioritised within the school development plan (SDP). The associated action plan is focused appropriately on improving further the children's standards and achievements and on ensuring consistency and progression in the children's learning through the increasingly systematic monitoring and evaluation of the provision, and more effective use of performance data.

The comprehensive whole-school programme for mathematics provides appropriate guidance for the teachers to plan effectively for a broad and balanced coverage of the mathematics curriculum. The teachers make very effective use of a wide range of resources, including ICT, to support the children in their learning and provide well-planned opportunities in which the children are able to apply their mathematical learning in everyday contexts and in other areas of the curriculum.

The children respond positively to mathematics and numeracy; they work well in paired and group activities and use a wide range of practical resources, including ICT programs, effectively to consolidate, support and enhance their learning. In the FS, the teachers develop appropriate mathematical concepts, skills and language through well-planned play-based activities. In KS1 and 2, the children progress well in their learning across all areas of the mathematics curriculum. They engage well in practical investigative and problem-solving activities set in meaningful contexts based on their own experiences.

During the inspection, the children demonstrated very good knowledge and understanding of important mathematical ideas and concepts, talked confidently about their learning using the appropriate mathematical language and demonstrated flexibility in their thinking.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The quality of planning for the curriculum across the school is very good. The teachers plan conscientiously to ensure consistency, variety, continuity and progression in the children's learning. The planning is matched closely to the needs of the children, including those with individual education plans, and, in the best practice, the teachers' evaluations inform appropriately future action for individuals and groups.

3.2 TEACHING

The quality of the teaching observed ranged from good to outstanding, with most being very good or outstanding. The teachers create an inclusive and supportive learning environment; they know the children well and relate the learning effectively to their interests and experiences. They discuss the learning intentions and related success criteria with the children and regularly refer back to both during lessons. As a result, there is a clear focus on the learning and the lessons are well structured. The teachers have high expectations and use effective questioning to encourage the children to reflect on their learning and develop their responses.

Additional support in literacy and numeracy for those children with special educational needs is provided through a combination of in-class and withdrawal sessions. The quality of the teaching and learning observed in the withdrawal sessions during the inspection was very good. The sessions are conducted in a supportive atmosphere. A particular strength of the provision is the extent to which the teacher providing the withdrawal support plans co-operatively with the class teachers to ensure that the work covered in the withdrawal sessions complements and supports the work the children are doing in class.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The teachers have recently received training in the use of Assessment Manager, in the context of the School Information and Management System, and are now tracking the progress of individual children throughout the school. A good start has been made in using the information on the children's attainments and abilities to plan and provide more strategically for their provision.

The school uses information on the children, including assessment outcomes, teachers' observations and judgements, appropriately to identify those who require additional support with aspects of their learning. The special educational needs co-ordinator tracks the progress of the children who require additional support in a systematic manner, monitors and evaluates the support and maintains an updated special educational needs register.

The teachers report the children's progress to the parents on a regular basis. Carefully recorded observations are undertaken by the teachers and used to inform the written report and the discussions at the parent teacher meetings. The written reports are of a good quality and are comprehensive in their indication to the parents of their children's progress, strengths and areas for further development.

The teachers mark the children's work regularly and conscientiously. They add supportive and appreciative comments to affirm the quality of the work and the effort which the children make. In the best practice seen, the teachers indicate to the children how the work could be improved. Within the context of assessment for learning, the children are adept at evaluating their own understanding at the completion of lessons or a piece of work and are able to comment helpfully upon the work of their peers.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The overall quality of leadership and management in this school is very good.

The Principal, who has been in post for just over a year, provides outstanding strategic leadership. He sets a positive tone for the work of the school based on a shared vision for the ongoing development of the school which is focused appropriately on providing the highest possible standards and experiences for the children. He provides clear and realistic direction for the work of the school underpinned by a professional knowledge and understanding of the curriculum, and enables staff to carry out roles and responsibilities to a high standard. The Senior Leadership Team and the co-ordinators provide effective leadership based on mutual respect and collegiality in developing and monitoring the pastoral and curricular areas of school life.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

A culture of self-evaluation and reflection which involves the children, staff, parents and governors, is evident throughout all aspects of the school's provision. An effective SDP is in place and is clearly focused on raising further the very good standards achieved by the children in literacy and numeracy. The SDP is supported by a well-structured staff development programme and there is evidence that the opportunities taken for continuing professional development are impacting positively on the quality of learning and teaching in the school. The SDP meets fully the requirements of the Education (School Development Plans) Regulations NI 2005 Order.

4.3 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The school governors make very positive contributions to the life and work of the school; they are fully involved in the strategic planning and policy development and support effectively the Principal and staff in the implementation of the SDP. They are involved in the ongoing review of all aspects of the work of the school, and are aware of the need to keep under review the policy relating to the reception provision.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the exemplary behaviour and high levels of motivation of the children who engage confidently in, and respond positively to, their learning;
- the outstanding quality of the provision for pastoral care
- the very good standards achieved by the children in literacy and numeracy;
- the very good provision for children who require additional support with aspects of their learning;
- the quality of the teaching observed which was very good or outstanding in most of the lessons; and
- the very good leadership and management throughout the school and the outstanding strategic leadership provided by the Principal.

5.2 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

5.3 No follow-up inspection is required.

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