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Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

**Ballygolan Primary School
Belfast**

December 2011

FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOCUSED INSPECTION OF BALLYGOLAN PRIMARY SCHOOL, BELFAST, BT36 7HB (101-0296)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a focused inspection of Ballygolan Primary School in the week of 8 March 2010 and as a result the school entered the formal intervention process on 23 March 2010. The Department of Education (DE) indicated at that time that a follow-up inspection would take place and that, in the interim, a follow-up visit (IFUV) would monitor the progress being made in bringing about the necessary improvements.

The focused inspection in March 2010 highlighted strengths in:

- the exemplary behaviour of the children and their ability to work collaboratively with their peers;
- the school's commitment to inclusion, demonstrated through well-planned opportunities for the children in the mainstream and in the special units to integrate;
- the very good quality of the provision in the unit for the hearing impaired children and in the key stage (KS) 1 speech and language unit; and
- the good quality of the pastoral care and the effective links established with external agencies.

The inspection identified the need to improve:

- the quality of leadership, ensuring that the school development plan is adjusted in line with the inspection findings, and that teachers are led and supported in developing a culture of self-evaluation leading to improvement;
- the quality of teaching, and in particular for the teachers to have higher expectations for what the children can achieve, and to agree and implement teaching strategies that match the needs and abilities of all of the children; and
- the provision and inadequate standards in numeracy and literacy across the school.

The post-inspection action plan was received by DE in September 2010. The DE acknowledged the positive response that the school had made, and planned to make, regarding the areas for improvement identified in the report.

Initial visits were carried out by the ETI on 10 December 2010 and on 16 June 2011, and the interim follow-up visit (IFUV) took place on 30 September 2011. At the time of the IFUV the school was addressing the key issues for improvement identified in the original report.

In the interval since the original inspection the school has received extensive support from the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) of the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB), and the following changes which affect the work of the school have taken place:

- the enrolment has decreased further and stands currently at 46 in the primary school;

- there has been a significant number of staff changes, including the retirement of the Principal;
- an acting-Principal has been appointed from within the school;
- four temporary teachers have been appointed; and
- changes have been made to school's physical learning environment.

The following are the most important improvements since the inspection:

- the quality of the teaching, observed during the follow-up inspection, ranged from good to very good, owing to:
 - the review of the teachers' planning across all areas of learning which has resulted in planning that is now comprehensive, broad, balanced and matched more closely to the ability level of the individual children;
 - the development of the teachers' evaluations of the children's learning with a greater focus on informing future planning and assessing the children's progress; and
 - the teachers holding increasingly higher expectations of what the children can achieve during lessons.
- the improving trend in KS outcomes¹, for example the levels of attainment at KS2, which have risen steadily from 31% in literacy and 23% in numeracy at the time of the original inspection to 100% and 100%, respectively in 2011;
- the acting-Principal is monitoring appropriately the quality of the provision, including the teachers' planning and evaluations of learning;
- the use of assessment data has been extended, collated centrally and the school is now using the available information to monitor more effectively the progress of individual children; and
- the children have higher levels of motivation to learn and they are gaining in confidence.

However, owing to the staff changes and the temporary nature of staffing appointments, the roles and responsibilities for co-ordinating key areas of the curriculum are not yet clearly defined.

Overall, the quality of education provided by the school is now satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The follow-up inspection has identified continuing areas for improvement in standards and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the school is to meet effectively the needs of all of the children.

¹ 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 areas for improvement are to:

- raise further the overall standards in literacy and numeracy;
- clarify the roles and responsibilities for the co-ordination of key areas of the curriculum, particularly in numeracy and literacy; and
- continue to improve the quality of leadership through developing further the processes of self-evaluation with a clear focus on identifying the actions to bring about further improvement and raise standards.

It continues to be important, particularly in light of the high number of temporary staff appointments and the associated lack of defined co-ordinating roles and responsibilities, 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 pupils and the staff.

The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-24 month period.

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