



*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**



Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

**Kirkinriola Primary School
Ballymena**

May 2014

FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF KIRKINRIOLA PRIMARY SCHOOL, BALLYMENA, CO ANTRIM, BT43 6TB (301-0780)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a focused inspection of Kirkinriola Primary School in the week of 28 March 2011 and the school was evaluated as inadequate. The inspection team identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- 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 School Development Plan (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.

The school entered the formal intervention process on 13 April 2011. The Department of Education (DE) indicated at that time that a follow-up inspection would take place and that, in the interim, follow-up visits would evaluate the progress being made in bringing about the necessary improvements¹. An initial visit was carried out by ETI on 23 November 2011 to discuss the post-inspection action plan and as a result, the plan was adjusted. An interim follow-up visit (IFUV) took place on 2 February 2012.

A follow-up inspection (FUI) was carried out in the week of 5 November 2012². As a result, the quality of education was evaluated as satisfactory: the strengths outweighed the areas for improvement in the provision. The follow-up inspection identified three areas for improvement in standards, learning and teaching and leadership and management:

- for the principal and staff, supported by the governors, to work together to build upon the more effective working relationships presently evident in the best interests of the children;
- to continue to raise standards in literacy and numeracy, particularly at key stage (KS) 1; and
- to improve the quality of the leadership and management at a senior leadership level, in particular, revising the school development plan and developing a more critical and reflective approach towards self-evaluation and using effectively the outcomes of the monitoring activities to plan for and effect sustained improvement.

¹ For further details, see the key strengths and areas for improvement reported originally in the Report of an Inspection of Kirkinriola Primary School in March 2011

² For further details, see the key strengths and areas for improvement reported in the Report of a Follow-up Inspection of Kirkinriola Primary School in November 2012

The Department of Education (DE) indicated at that time that the ETI would continue to monitor the school's provision, a further follow-up inspection would be conducted within the appropriate timescale and a report would be published. In addition, an interim follow-up visit (IFUV) would monitor the progress being made in bringing about the necessary improvements. The ETI carried out an IFUV on 11 June 2013 and a subsequent monitoring visit on 14 April 2014.

A second FUI was conducted on 15 and 16 May 2014. The arrangements for this second FUI included: meetings with the acting-chairperson of the board of governors, the support officer from the Curriculum Advisory Service (CASS) of the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) and the school's co-ordinators for literacy and numeracy. The parents, teaching and support staff also had the opportunity to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Data on the questionnaire returns is shown in the table below.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	27	10	37%	10
Teaching staff	*	*	80%	*
Teaching support staff	*	*	50%	*
Support staff	*	*	100%	0

- fewer than 5

Overall, the responses from the questionnaires indicated very positive support in relation to the quality of the children's learning, well-being and care within the school. Most of the responses also expressed concerns relating to the quality of the senior leadership and management of the school and the standing and future of the school in the local community. The ETI reported to the acting-principals and acting-chairperson the range of views emerging from the questionnaires.

In the interval since the first FUI, the school received support from the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) in developing action plans to address the key findings of the inspection report from the first FUI. The action plans produced were of good quality.

The following are the most important changes that have taken place since the first FUI:

- the principal commenced a leadership mentoring and coaching support programme facilitated through the NEELB;
- a process of mediation between the principal and the teaching staff commenced, facilitated by an external organisation;
- two teachers shared the role of acting-principal during the periods of long-term absence of the principal, including at the time of the second FUI;
- a temporary teacher was appointed in September 2013 and additional teaching support was provided for one day a week through the Northern Ireland Signature Project;
- there were significant changes in the governance, including a small number of resignations and new appointments. In April 2014, the board of governors was reconstituted in line with the requisite NEELB timeframe. The position of chairperson is being filled currently in an acting capacity;

- the staff and principal completed work in creating and updating a range of key policies;
- the staff engaged in further professional development across a range of aspects of literacy, numeracy and the use of assessment data;
- the co-ordinators led the staff in developing and implementing a line of progression for writing, and are currently completing further lines of development for spelling and aspects of numeracy;
- the school development plan was reviewed and updated; and
- the school's enrolment fell further from 57 to 35 children who are now being taught in three composite classes.

There have been important improvements since the first FUI.

- Most of the children attain good standards in their reading, writing and mathematics, including their ability to talk about, plan and draft their writing independently and to use mathematical language and mental mathematics strategies well.
- The children's enjoyment of their learning and their confidence in sharing and explaining their thinking with one another and adults have increased; the children demonstrate good levels of independence, taking greater responsibility for their own learning and understanding better how to transfer and apply important concepts and skills.
- The quality of the provision in literacy and numeracy is good. This is evidenced through the teachers' detailed planning for and assessment of the progression in the children's learning and the school's improved strategies to identify and address underachievement, based on the more effective use of performance data.
- The staff have an enhanced understanding of what constitutes high quality learning and teaching; they use a wider range of teaching strategies and approaches including effective questioning enabling the children to provide more extended responses and develop further their thinking and problem-solving skills.
- The new school development plan and associated action plans inform well the work of the school and are leading to significant improvement through the identification of appropriate priorities and robust monitoring strategies.
- The two acting-principals have provided good quality leadership and have ensured that the school continues to make improvements in relation to the provision and the standards achieved by the children.

- The co-ordinators have developed a more reflective and critical approach to self-evaluation, informed by more effective monitoring and evaluating strategies, to plan for and bring about sustained improvement. These strategies include the monitoring of teachers' planning, analysis of performance data, internal moderation of the quality of the children's work in literacy and numeracy and evaluating, through classroom observations, the quality of the teaching and learning.
- The parents and the local community are much more involved in the life and work of the school.

The quality of the teaching observed during the second FUI ranged from good to very good; in almost all of the lessons, the teaching was very good. The acting-principals and the staff team have worked diligently to bring about significant improvements in the children's attainments and they have achieved an overall good quality of provision.

As at the time of the first FUI, there remains a continuing and significant area for improvement regarding the leadership and management of the school. The quality of the working relationships and communication needs to be addressed as soon as possible if the school is to meet more effectively the needs of all the staff and children. Both the mediation process for the staff and the principal's mentoring programme which have commenced have not yet progressed sufficiently to make a meaningful and lasting impact on the overall quality of the working relationships and communication within the school.

Conclusion

There have been significant improvements in standards, learning and teaching, and the quality of the provision. An important issue remains, relating to the leadership and management of the school. Overall, the quality of education provided by the primary school remains satisfactory. The strengths outweigh the areas for improvement in the provision.

Consequently, there remains an urgent need:

- to improve the leadership and management at a senior leadership level, in particular, the need to secure and sustain more effective working relationships and communication strategies, in the best interests of the children³.

It continues to 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 district inspector will continue to monitor the school's provision and a formal follow-up inspection will be conducted within 12-18 months.

³ Owing to the long-term absences of the principal, and for this contextual reason, it has not been possible for the school to address these aspects of the areas for improvement identified at the time of the original inspection. As a result, these remain areas for improvement which will need to be addressed in due course and their outcome evaluated subsequently.

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