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*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

**St Joseph's Primary School
Ballymartin**

February 2014

FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF ST JOSEPH'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, BALLYMARTIN, CO DOWN, BT34 4PA (503-1325)

The focused inspection of St Joseph's Primary School in November 2012 highlighted strengths in relation to the pastoral care provision, the opportunities for the children to contribute to decision making regarding the school environment and the commitment of the staff.

The inspection identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- for the teachers to develop a shared understanding of what constitutes effective learning and teaching, specifically in relation to differentiation and progression in the children's learning, in order to raise the children's attainment in literacy and numeracy; and
- for all those involved in leading and managing the school to identify, prioritise and implement, in a strategic and manageable manner, the actions to bring about sustained improvement in the overall quality of provision in the school and, in particular, in the quality of teaching and learning.

During the original inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding children were satisfactory. It was recommended that the safeguarding policies be updated to reflect the changes in staff and that, while the policies are available on the school website, a printed copy should be made available to parents every two years.

The inspection conclusion in November 2012 was that:

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

Since the original inspection, the enrolment has increased from 83 to 89 and the number of children identified by the school as requiring support with aspects of their learning has been reduced from 31% to 21%. The number of children entitled to free school meals has increased slightly from 27% to 30%.

At the time of the original inspection, one of the two permanent members of the teaching staff was acting-principal and there have been a further two acting-principals in post in the interim period. The current acting-principal took up post on 29 August 2013.

The school entered the formal intervention process on 17 December 2012. The Department of Education (DE) indicated at that time that a follow-up inspection would take place and that, in the interim, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) would evaluate the progress being made in bringing about the necessary improvements through follow-up visits. The post-inspection action plan was received in DE in April 2013. The Department of Education acknowledged the positive response that the school had made, and planned to make, regarding the areas for improvement identified in the report. The first interim follow-up visit took place on 10 April 2013 and a monitoring visit took place on 19 September 2013, with a second interim follow-up visit on 12 November 2013.

In the interval since the original inspection, the school received extensive support from the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) of the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB).

Since the original inspection, the following actions which affect the work of the school have taken place:

- the staff received extensive professional development and support from SELB CASS in a number of areas including literacy, numeracy, special educational needs and leadership and management. The acting principal availed of SELB and Regional Training Unit (RTU) training for first- time principals;
- the staff visited a number of other primary schools to observe and share good practice;
- the roles and responsibilities of the co-ordinators were clarified and enhanced to include monitoring of planning, analysis of performance data, internal moderation of the quality of the children's work in literacy and numeracy, evaluating the quality of the teaching and learning through classroom observations, engaging the children in attitudinal surveys, organising and leading parents' curricular workshops, and staff development;
- the school development plan was reviewed and updated in consultation with the parents, children and the board of governors;
- the safeguarding policies were updated to reflect the current staffing and were distributed to the parents and made available on the school website;
- the literacy co-ordinator and all of the classroom assistants were trained in Reading Partnership;
- the school, in conjunction with the parent support group, invested in new resources including an interactive reading and phonic scheme, a set of i-Pads and additional interactive whiteboards;
- the staff reviewed whole-school long, medium and short-term planning and assessment;
- the deployment of staff expertise was reviewed to support further children with additional learning needs, including the more able; and
- the children were further involved in the life and work of the school through, for example, the School Council and the 'Reading Buddy' programme.

The following are the most important improvements since the original inspection:

- the collegial and child-centred approach to addressing the areas for improvement;
- the new school development plan and associated action plans which inform well the work of the school and are leading to significant improvement through the identification of appropriate priorities and robust monitoring strategies;

- the shared understanding of high quality learning and teaching to take account of the children's interests, needs and abilities as evidenced by the effective planning and subsequent evaluations, and by the very good to outstanding quality of the teaching in over one-half of the lessons observed during the follow-up inspection;
- the children's enjoyment of their learning and their confidence in articulating their ideas and opinions in response to the teachers' effective questioning; the children demonstrate increasing levels of independence through taking responsibility for their own learning and are able to transfer and apply key skills across the curriculum;
- the teachers' high expectations of the children, evidenced by the improved quality of the children's work and levels of presentation. The school's internal data shows that in English and in mathematics, almost all of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, are achieving in line with or above expectation. The regular analysis of performance data is used to identify the individual needs of all the children, set appropriate targets, track the children's progress, and inform the learning and teaching;
- the strategic and rigorous system for monitoring and evaluating the quality of learning and teaching which informs well whole school priorities for improvement, and individual class and child's progress;
- the effective arrangements for children who require additional support with their learning including the education plans which are well focused and provide detailed strategies for teachers and parents to support the children's learning; appropriate intervention strategies are in place and the children's progress is regularly monitored and shared systematically with parents; and
- the involvement of the parents and the local community in the life and work of the school and, in particular, the enhanced opportunities for parents and families to support their children's learning.

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

APPENDIX

Health and safety

- There is an urgent need for the board of governors and the employing authority to review and carry out a further risk assessment of the car parking facilities and the playground arrangements in conjunction with the neighbouring Church.
- There is an urgent need to review the lack of secure access to the temporary classrooms and rear entrance to the main school building.

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