

PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Ashgrove Primary School,
Newtownabbey, Co Antrim

Report of an Inspection in
November 2014

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

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
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Quantitative terms

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%

Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels in reports:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

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1. Inspection method and evidence base

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of primary schools, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self-evaluation* at: <http://www.eti.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-primary.htm>.

Inspectors observed teaching and learning, and the children's written work and held formal and informal discussions with children, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- meetings with representatives from the governors;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Ten percent of the parents responded to the questionnaires; their responses indicated satisfaction with the work of the school and acknowledged the hard working staff who strive to do their best for the children. A significant minority of the parents raised concerns about the quality of communication and instability of leadership and management within the school. Thirty percent of the staff completed questionnaires and their responses were generally supportive of the work of the school; however, there was dissatisfaction with resourcing for learning and teaching in the school. ETI has reported to the interim principal and the representatives of the board of governors, and discussed with them the main issues and concerns arising from the questionnaires.

2. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

1. the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy, in particular, how the school is addressing low attainment and underachievement where applicable;
2. the quality of provision for literacy and numeracy in the school; and
3. the quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

Ashgrove Primary School is situated on Ashgrove Road, Carnmoney in Newtownabbey just outside Belfast. Nearly all of the children come from the local community and the wider surrounding area. The school's enrolment has risen in three of the past four years and is presently 376 children. At the time of the inspection, there was a lack of stability in the leadership roles within the school. The current principal has been appointed on an interim basis and the vice-principal is in an acting-up role, as are nearly all of the curriculum co-ordinators.

Ashgrove Primary School	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	353	359	381	376
% Attendance (NI Average)	94.1 (95)	94.2 (94)	93.9 (94)	
FSME Percentage ¹	17	19	21	23
% (No) of children on SEN register	16 (57)	18 (66)	17 (66)	15 (56)
No. of children with statements of educational needs	8	6	6	8
No. of newcomers	6	*	*	*

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall Performance Level	Inadequate
Achievements and Standards	Satisfactory
Provision	Satisfactory
Leadership and Management	Inadequate

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are friendly, courteous and well-behaved; they co-operate respectfully with their teachers and engage well in their learning. When given the opportunity, they are able to work purposefully and independently to complete the learning tasks.
- The school's internal assessment data shows that most of the children make satisfactory progress in English and mathematics, in line with their ability and a minority are achieving above expectation.
- The standards achieved by the children in English and mathematics are satisfactory. Most of the children work in a variety of groupings and talk about aspects of their learning with some confidence. By year 7, the most able children read with interest and understanding across a range of fiction. When given the opportunity, most of the children write with increasing competence in various forms across the curriculum. Most of the children engage well in mental mathematics and are beginning to use mathematical terminology with increasing accuracy. By year 7, the most able children are knowledgeable in the majority of the areas of the mathematics curriculum and can explain their strategies.
- The majority of children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are working in line with their ability and reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Throughout the school, the children attain satisfactory standards in information and communication technology (ICT) and use it to enhance their learning.

¹ The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

6. Provision

- The quality of the learning, teaching and assessment is inconsistent within and across key stages; assessment for learning strategies need to be implemented more consistently across the whole school. The school's joint literacy and numeracy policy is inadequate; it lacks sufficient detail to guide the work of literacy and numeracy throughout the school. The teachers' short-term planning informs well the day-to-day learning and teaching within their year groups. The teachers now need to come together as key-stage and whole-school teams to plan for greater consistency and progression in the children's learning across the three key stages. The majority of the lessons observed were effective in promoting learning; one-third are in need of improvement. In the effective practice, the teachers build well on the children's interests and experiences and make appropriate use of open-ended questions to develop further the children's understanding. In the less effective practice, the lessons lack pace and challenge and insufficient account is taken of the range of the children's individual learning needs. The classroom assistants play a valuable role in supporting the children's learning. The children's work is marked regularly and, in the best practice, a minority of the teachers indicate clearly to the children how they can improve their work. A key finding of this inspection report is the need to identify and disseminate the elements of effective practice existing within the school.
- The staff provide a supportive learning environment for literacy, including colourful displays of the children's developing written work. From an early stage, the staff encourage the children to use their knowledge of sounds to help them write independently.
- The numeracy planning includes all areas of the mathematics curriculum. In the effective practice, the lessons were well structured with appropriate mental mathematics starter activities, clear learning tasks and plenaries that helped the children to consolidate their learning and develop their use of mathematical language. In the majority of the numeracy lessons, the children did not show a good understanding of accurate mathematical language and the learning activities were low-level and decontextualised.
- The school has an inclusive approach to special education needs provision. During the inspection, the teachers and assistants were observed giving sensitive support to both individuals and small groups of children. The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified early and support is provided through, in-class and withdrawal sessions to help meet their individual needs. The individual education plans need to be reviewed within the agreed timeframe and developed further to identify specific, key targets and support strategies to guide more effectively the teachers and assistants in their day-to-day work with the children. In addition, the teachers need to make effective use of all the available data and other information to track and monitor the children's progress and development.

- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is satisfactory. Amongst the strengths are: the caring ethos; the varied range of extra-curricular activities available to the children; and, the well-organised breakfast club. There are, however, important areas for improvement which include: the need to review the settling-in procedure for the year 1 children in order to maximise the children's learning opportunities and take account of their previous experiences; review the break and lunch-time playground routines; develop more effective forms of communication with the parents; and, increase the children's voice in aspects of school life including the selection process for the school council.
- The school gives satisfactory attention to healthy eating and physical activity through the promotion of healthy breaks and provides regular opportunities for the children to engage in energetic physical activity, which encourage them to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership of the school is ineffective at all levels. There is a lack of a collaborative, shared vision for school improvement and inadequate strategic direction for future developments in the school. The employing authority, the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) and the board of governors need to review urgently the leadership arrangements in this school.
- The school development planning process does not use the school's quantitative data effectively; there is poor communication to staff of the school's priorities for improvement and insufficient consultation with key stakeholders. The school development plan needs to be reviewed urgently, in order to make links between the assessment of the children's progress and associated target setting. Across all aspects of the school's provision, a culture of self-evaluation needs to be developed to support the school improvement process. In order to bring about the development of robust self-evaluation, there is a need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the curriculum co-ordinators and to develop their capacity to lead improvement in their areas of responsibility.
- The recently appointed interim principal has identified appropriately and prioritised key areas for improvement in the pastoral and curricular provision. It is appropriate that school improvement teams have been established to review the current provision and take forward identified areas for improvement.
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, ETI's evaluation is that there can be a limited degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are supportive of the school but need to be better informed about all aspects of the life and work of the school. They need to exercise more rigorously their challenge function in relation to policies, standards and the quality of the learning and teaching.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school's arrangements for safeguarding children are unsatisfactory and do not adequately reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. In particular, the school needs to: ensure that all points of access into and within the school are secure; provide a central secure system for the storage of all confidential child protection documentation; review and update all child protection policies and make these available to all relevant stakeholders; appoint a designated governor

for child protection; and, provide a more comprehensive personal development and mutual understanding programme (PDMU) to develop the voice of the child and promote keeping-safe messages within the school. In discussions with the inspectors, the children reported that they knew what to do if they had any concerns about their well-being; however, a few children said that they did not feel safe in certain areas of the school.

8. Conclusion

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

The main areas for improvement include the need to:

- provide effective, stable leadership at all levels throughout the school and make effective use of data to inform practice at all levels and to effect whole-school improvement, which should include addressing the deficiencies in the safeguarding arrangements;
- develop a shared understanding of what constitutes effective learning, teaching and differentiation in order to ensure appropriate progression in the children's learning and improve the consistency in the quality of the learning experiences provided for all the children; and
- agree and implement a robust whole-school approach to monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school's provision, and use the outcomes, to inform the school's development planning process and to raise the standards achieved by all the children.

The governors, principal and staff will require external and well-focused support from the North- Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) Curriculum Advisory Support Services (CASS) to help them take forward the necessary areas for improvement.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-18 month period.

Health and safety

1. There is a need for the employing authority, the board of governors and staff to carry out a risk assessment with regard to access to the school building and grounds; all main access areas need to be secured to ensure children are kept safe.
2. The board of governors and staff need to monitor the movement of children in the outdoor environment and review the arrangements for lunchtime.
3. There is a need for the board of governors and the school leadership team to carry out a risk assessment in relation to the congested areas around the school at drop-off and pick-up times.

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