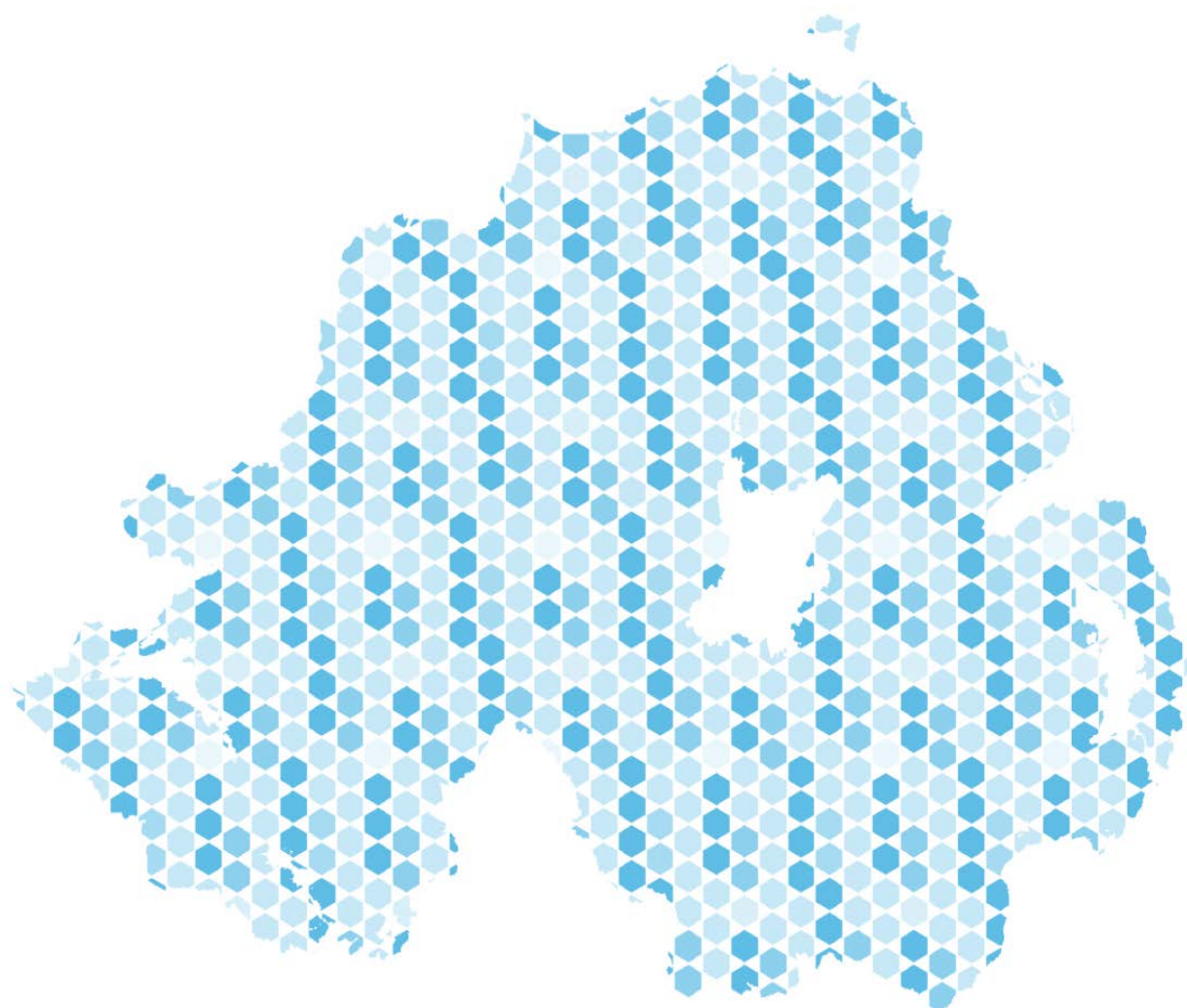


PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Ballyclare Primary School,
Co Antrim

Report of an Inspection in
February 2015

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

Contents

Section	Page
1. Inspection method and evidence base	1
2. Focus of inspection	1
3. Context	1
4. Overall findings of the inspection	2
5. Achievements and standards	2
6. Provision	3
7. Leadership and management	4
8. Conclusion	5

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, scrutinised documentation 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:

- a meeting 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.

Twelve per cent of the parents and almost all of the staff (teaching and non-teaching) responded to the questionnaires. The responses to the parental questionnaires indicated high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted how happy their children are at the school and they acknowledged the professionalism and commitment of the staff. The staff questionnaire responses were very positive, in particular, they emphasised the dedication of the principal and the high standards she sets; the collegiality of the staff; and the child-centred focus on a caring ethos within the school. The governors expressed their appreciation of the hard work and dedication of the principal and all of the staff. The ETI has reported to the principal and representatives of the board of governors the main findings emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

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

Ballyclare Primary School is situated on the Doagh Road in Ballyclare. A majority of the children live in the town. The enrolment of the school has increased over the past four years and currently stands at 493 children. At the time of the inspection, approximately 25% of the children were entitled to receive free school meals and 25% of the children were identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

Ballyclare Primary School	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	444	467	494	493
% Attendance (NI Average)	96	95.3	95.4	98
FSME Percentage ¹	16.44	20.77	25	25
% (No) of children on SEN register	30.86	30.62	26.52	24.7
No. of children with statements of educational needs	5	7	3	6
No. of newcomers	4	3	1	1

Source: data as held by the school.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall Performance Level	Very Good
Achievements and Standards	Very Good
Provision	Very Good
Leadership and Management	Outstanding

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are friendly, courteous and happy, they respond well to the staff's high expectations. An effective reward system has a positive impact on the children's behaviour, their levels of motivation and pride in their work. They work individually, in pairs and in groups, and show increasingly a level of independence and maturity as they progress through the school. Almost all of the children settle quickly to their work and their behaviour is exemplary both in class and as they move around the school; they are respectful towards their peers and the staff and engage very well with visitors to the school.
- The school's internal data shows that, in English and mathematics, the children make very good progress; and almost all achieve in line with their ability or above expectation.
- The children's achievements and standards in literacy are very good. Throughout the school, the children talk confidently about their learning and share their views willingly with their teachers and peers. In discussion with the children, they expressed an enjoyment of reading and spoke knowledgeably about a wide range of books, including classic literature. Across the key stages the children are able to write in different forms and for a variety of purposes; in key stage (KS) 2 the children have very good opportunities to plan and redraft their work to improve the quality of their writing. The school has adopted a systematic and coherent approach to handwriting which is evident through the very good quality of the presentation of the children's written work.

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

- The children have a positive attitude to mathematics; across all the key stages, they apply their mathematical skills confidently in practical activities and challenging investigations. They are precise and thorough in their mathematics work and present it to a high standard. By year 7, the more able children are very secure in their understanding of key concepts across the areas of mathematics and demonstrate flexibility in their thinking by using very effectively a range of mental strategies to solve mathematical problems.
- The children who receive additional support with aspects of their learning engage very well with their individualised support programmes and make very good progress. They take pride in their work and learn within the fully inclusive ethos that permeates the life of the school. By year 7, almost all of the children are achieving standards in literacy and numeracy which are in line with their ability.
- The children use information and communication technology (UICT) confidently to enhance their learning. They build an e-portfolio of work which shows good progression in their skills as they advance through the school.

6. Provision

- The teachers plan their work conscientiously and effectively. In the most effective practice, the teachers complete useful evaluations of the quality of the children's learning; the information is used well to inform future planning and to ensure that provision meets the needs of all of the children. In the most effective lessons, in a majority of the lessons observed, the teachers used effective questioning that resulted in thoughtful discussions, and appropriate opportunities were provided for the children to develop their thinking skills. In addition, the teachers used a range of effective teaching strategies and often linked learning to other areas of the curriculum. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used very well to enhance and support the quality of learning.
- The school's programme for language and literacy ensures progression across the key stages in talking and listening, reading and writing. By the end of the foundation stage, the children are developing well their phonological awareness and are confident in 'having a go' to express their ideas through, for example, writing simple sentences and recipes. As they progress through the school, the children use spelling, punctuation and grammar with increasing accuracy and write competently for a range of purposes and audiences. A key strength of the school's provision is the well planned guided reading programme where children develop effectively their fluency and enjoyment of reading using a wide range of banded reading books, class novels, guided reading activities and regular visits to the local library. The teachers are developing currently their shared understanding of effective reading strategies to extend further the children's knowledge of authors' writing styles.
- The programme for mathematics is comprehensive and provides for balance and progression in the children's knowledge, understanding and skills. The whole-school focus on developing calculation skills, through regular mental mathematics sessions and daily challenges, benefit the children well by extending their reasoning skills and developing their use of mathematical language. In the most effective practice, the children respond well and contribute enthusiastically to well-planned opportunities to engage in investigations and problem-solving in pairs and in small groups. It is appropriate

that the school has identified the need to provide further support to challenge and extend the high achievers in mathematics. There are very good opportunities provided for the children to apply their numeracy skills in real and relevant contexts through the focus on financial capability and the World Around Us.

- The provision for the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning is highly effective. Early identification is prioritised through close links with the nursery school, staff observations and the careful analysis of internal assessment data. The support for literacy and numeracy is provided through a programme of well focused withdrawal sessions and in-class support. The individual education plans are clearly focused on the specific needs of the children and are closely monitored by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO). A particular strength in the special educational needs provision is the high priority given to engaging the parents in their children's learning. A dedicated special educational needs parent-liaison teacher provides innovative links with parents which impacts positively on the children's learning.
- The quality of pastoral care in the school is outstanding and the outworking of the school's vision statement, "a place in the sun for everyone," is firmly embedded in the pastoral provision and lived throughout the school. The school provides a positive and nurturing learning environment for all the children in which they are central, valued and enabled to achieve their best. There are excellent working relationships at all levels and the staff are highly committed to the academic and pastoral needs of all the children. The children's views and opinions are valued and listened to and, where appropriate, acted upon. They make meaningful contributions to life and work of the school, through initiatives such as the playground buddies scheme, learning leaders and the active school- and Eco councils. The children are made aware of the needs of others less fortunate than themselves through fundraising for a wide range of charities.
- A strong sense of team-spirit pervades the work of the school. The classroom assistants support the teachers and provide additional help for individuals and groups of children in the classes; they make a valuable and worthwhile contribution to the children's learning.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy-eating and physical activity through both the curriculum and the provision of an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities that enrich the children's experience and develops well their interests, confidence and encourages them to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership and management of the school is outstanding. The senior leaders have a clear strategic vision, which places an appropriate emphasis on the successful development of the curricular provision and on the pastoral dimension of the school. The improvement process is linked to a comprehensive School Development Plan (SDP). A wide range of appropriate policies and action plans are in place which support effectively a culture of review and development for school improvement. There are very good opportunities for consultation about the SDP across the entire school community; the parents and governors are fully involved in the process of school improvement. The school makes effective use of data and other assessment information to inform target-setting, identify individual needs and inform appropriate intervention strategies.

- The governors collaborate effectively with the principal and staff; they support and challenge the progress of the actions which are carried out in the implementation of the school development plan. In discussions with the governors, they praised the principal and the staff of the school for their commitment and dedication to the children. Based on the evidence presented at the time of the inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance inspected.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The children report that they feel safe and happy in school; their concerns are dealt with effectively. They are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.

8. Conclusion

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.

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