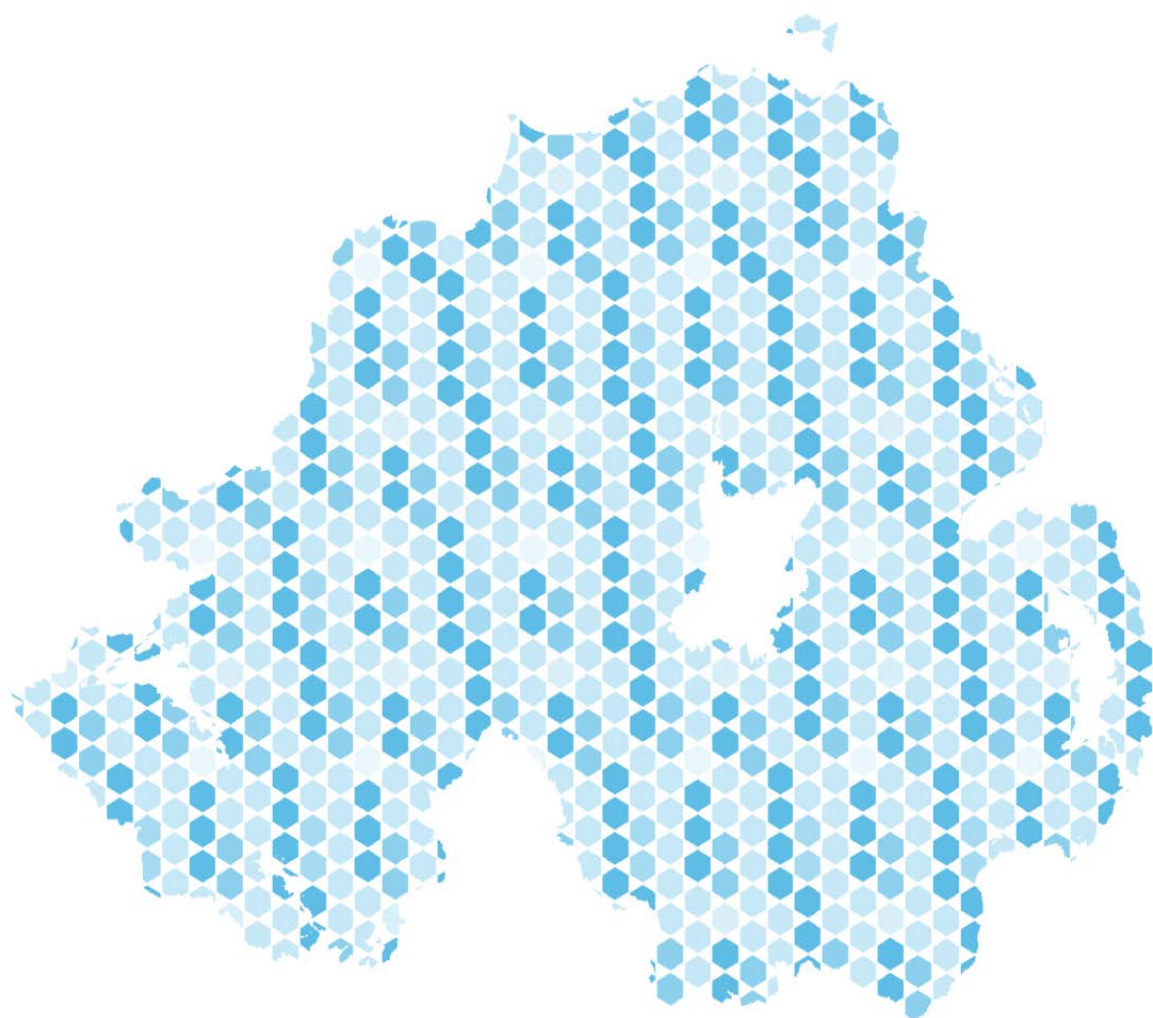


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Ballymoney Independent
Christian School

Report of an Inspection
in September 2013



Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



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.etini.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-primary.htm>.

The inspectors observed teaching and learning, scrutinised documentation and the children's written work, held discussions with the principal, the teacher, the support staff and the Administrator of the Management Committee and attended a morning assembly.

2. Context

Ballymoney Independent Christian School is located in the Hebron Church complex on Market Street in Ballymoney, County Antrim. The school is administered by Ballymoney Free Presbyterian Church and is funded through fees, gifts and offerings. The school enrolment has risen steadily over the past three years and there are currently 14 children who are taught in two composite classes, one comprising of years 1 to 3 children and the other, years 5 and 7 children. There are currently no year 4 or year 6 children. All the children come from Ballymoney and the surrounding area.

As part of the inspection process, the inspectors met with the Administrator of the Management Committee. He emphasised the Christian principles which permeate the life and work of the school, the strong family ethos and the sense of church community. The Administrator outlined the core role of the Management Committee and praised the diligent work and commitment of the teachers and support staff.

Ballymoney Independent Christian School	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Enrolment	12	7	9	14
% Attendance (NI Average)	86%	99%	97%	
FSME Percentage ¹	0	0	0	0
% (No) of children on SEN register	0	0	0	0
No. of children with statements of educational needs	0	0	0	0
No. of newcomers	0	0	0	0

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy, in particular, how the school is addressing low attainment and under-achievement where applicable;
- the quality of provision in the school; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

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

Key findings of the inspection

4. Achievements and standards

- The school provides a calm and caring learning environment where the children are valued and nurtured as individuals. The children's behaviour is exemplary; they are polite and courteous and show respect for their teachers and for visitors. They settle quickly to their work and are supportive of the needs of their peers. The children display an enthusiasm for and enjoyment of their learning.
- The school uses formal and informal methods of assessment to monitor the children's progress. The internal evidence and the limited performance data available show that all of the children are achieving good standards in line with their ability. The inspection endorses the school's interest in adopting additional assessment procedures to monitor the performance of the children and track their progress in order to inform and effect further improvements in the standards they achieve.

5. Provision for learning

- The quality of the teaching observed is good. The teachers interact well with the children and they provide effective learning support across the various age groups in the composite classes. The teachers share the teaching duties according to their area of expertise and interests. They are supported in their work by a part-time music and craft teacher, a part-time classroom assistant and a supervisory assistant. Overall, the children are provided with a broad and balanced curriculum based on the Northern Ireland Curriculum.
- The provision for literacy and mathematics is based primarily on commercial schemes. The children are confident in taking part in discussions and ask questions of the teachers and each other. They listen attentively to instructions and directions and are respectful when other children are expressing their opinions. Reading is taught in a progressive and systematic manner using a reading scheme and age appropriate novels. By the end of key stage (KS) 2, the children read with fluency, display good attitudes to reading and are keen to talk about their books. This enthusiasm should be harnessed further through the development of higher order comprehension skills using well-focused activities and discussions. A new library facility has been added recently to the provision and offers a wide range of reading material. The library includes a small computer suite where the children are encouraged to develop research methods, source information for individual topic based projects and enhance the presentation of their work. The children's written work is of a good quality and is well presented. The staff should give further consideration to the development of the lines of progression in the children's writing skills across a range of genre.
- The numeracy scheme provides structured coverage of the different aspects of mathematics and a line of progression for each year group. By the end of key stage (KS) 2, the children have good recall and understanding of measures and shape and space; they are able to complete number calculations with a good level of accuracy. The children would benefit from a planned approach to the development of the strategies relating to mental and investigative mathematics to improve further the flexibility of their thinking and their use of appropriate mathematical language.

- Short-term plans guide the work of the teachers in literacy and numeracy, and within each composite class, the children are provided with differentiated activities which are age and ability appropriate. There is detailed medium term planning in place for topic work and this is regularly evaluated by the teachers. The planning of topic work could be enhanced further by highlighting the connections across the curriculum and developing opportunities for the children to apply their skills to other areas of learning. The KS 2 children's musical ability and their dexterity and perseverance in craftwork are of a high quality and the children take pride in their achievements.
- The quality of the pastoral care is very good. The school promotes a family based ethos which is evident through the welcoming and inclusive atmosphere and positive working relationships at all levels. The teachers build the children's confidence and self-esteem through regular praise and reward. Achievements are shared and celebrated through imaginative displays of the children's work in the classrooms and shared areas. The senior children are caring and kind towards their younger peers.
- The school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. The children participate in weekly swimming lessons, have access to a tarmac playground and a grassed area for planned physical activity, and play outdoors. The children bring packed lunches daily and the parents are supportive of the promotion of healthily eating.

6. Leadership and management

- The principal has been in post for 15 years and is dedicated to the life and work of the school. She is ably supported by the committed staff, an assistant teacher who has been in post for 13 years and the part-time teacher and support staff. Due to the rising enrolment and the assistant teacher's responsibilities in the adjoining pre-school centre for three mornings each week, the principal has responsibility for all of the children on several occasions throughout the week. This arrangement places considerable organisational pressure on the principal and the possibility of acquiring additional adult support is currently being considered by the Management Committee.
- The Management Committee meets regularly to monitor and plan the financial and accommodation requirements. The Administrator has regular contact with the staff and the children through a weekly assembly. The Management Committee has delegated the development of the curriculum to the principal.
- The school's arrangements for self-evaluation and development planning are informal, at present. The principal and assistant teacher are involved in regular cluster group meetings with similar independent faith-based schools and plan shared curriculum based projects. Staff have used their expertise to contribute to professional development at these meetings. It may be timely to record these planned initiatives and developments and general school plans in a formal development document.

- The parents and the church community, through fundraising activities, gifts, offerings and voluntary assistance on school trips, actively support the school. The parents are regularly informed of their children's progress through two formal written reports throughout the year and the principal and teacher make themselves available for interview by parental request. The primary school maintains close links with the children and their parents of the adjoining pre-school centre, based within the Hebron Church complex, and links are maintained with the local post-primary schools.
- The school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements adhere to the child protection guidance issued by the Education Board of the church and reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The principal has agreed to distribute the most recent copy of the Child Protection policy to the parents and to display information for parents, children and visitors about how a concern might be raised.
- The accommodation is well maintained and provides a safe and stimulating learning environment for the children. The school makes regular use of the facilities within the adjacent church halls for assembly. Resources are well organised and shared across the classes.
- The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) recommend the continued registration of Ballymoney Independent Christian School.

7. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of the education provided by this school is good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The main strengths of the schools are: the strong spiritual ethos; the exemplary behaviour of the children and their willingness to engage in their learning; the commitment and diligent work of the staff; and, the support of the parents and church community.

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