

PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Tír na nÓg Primary School,
Ballyclare, Co Antrim

Report of an Inspection in
February 2015

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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

CUSTOMER
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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.etini.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 a group of children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Approximately one-third of parents and all of the staff (teaching and non-teaching) responded to the questionnaires. The responses to the parental questionnaires indicated very high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted their appreciation of the caring, supportive atmosphere of the school. All of the staff completed questionnaires and their responses were very positive; they emphasised the family atmosphere across the school and the good working relationships within the school community. ETI has reported to the principal and to representatives of the board of governors the few issues 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 numeracy in the school; and
3. the quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

Tír na nÓg Primary School is situated in Ballyclare and the catchment area extends throughout the town and surrounding area. The enrolment has increased slightly over the past four years remaining at under 30 children. There are two composite classes with a teaching principal, a full-time teacher and a principal's release teacher for two days a week. There has been a sustained period of staff changes; an acting teaching principal on secondment from another school began work at Tír na nÓg in November 2014, and a full-time teacher was appointed in October 2014

Tir na nÓg Primary School	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	28	23	25	29
% Attendance (NI Average)	95.4%	94.9%	96.3%	94.7%
FSME Percentage ¹	18%	17%	24%	20.7%
% (No) of children on SEN register	14%	21.7%	20%	31%
No. of children with statements of educational needs	*	*	*	*
No. of newcomers	*	*	*	*

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

4. Overall findings of the inspection

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

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are confident and positively disposed to learning. They demonstrate good levels of motivation and the ability to work both independently and with others. The staff place a clear focus on promoting skills and values; consequently, most of the children demonstrate well their capacity to be reflective thinkers. The children are confident in the classroom from an early age, asking and answering questions with enthusiasm. They behave very well and demonstrate very good personal and social skills, supporting each other in class and at play.
- The school's internal data shows that by key stage (KS) 2 all of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make good progress in mathematics and in English in line with their ability or above expectation.
- Overall, the standards achieved by the children in mathematics are good; they gain appropriate knowledge and understanding of key mathematical concepts and are successful in applying associated skills. In the lessons observed, the children engaged well in, and demonstrated an enjoyment of, the mathematics activities. By year 7, the most able children can apply competently a range of strategies, explain their thinking with confidence using appropriate mathematical language and can self-correct when appropriate. They also demonstrate flexible thinking in problem-solving tasks.
- Most of the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning make good progress and are able to work independently for increasingly sustained periods of time.

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

- The children demonstrate competence in information and communication technology (ICT) and there are many displays of their work throughout the school.

6. Provision

- In the most effective practice, the teachers' planning is comprehensive and well informed by careful evaluation of the children's previous learning. The lessons were well planned, and differentiated appropriately for the wide range of individual needs within the classroom, and had good pace and progression. The teachers have set a priority for developing more fully the children's thinking skills through more challenging activities and have introduced learning logs for the children to reflect and assess their learning. The children's books are marked regularly and the teachers advise clearly the children on how to improve their learning. The classroom assistant supports the children's learning very well.
- The children who require additional support in literacy and numeracy are identified at an early stage through teacher observation and assessment. The teachers write concise, individual education plan targets that are implemented well in the classroom using an appropriate range of strategies. The children gain self-confidence in their learning, and are involved well in individual target setting, evaluating regularly their achievements.
- The teachers provide a supportive and stimulating learning environment for numeracy. In all key stages, the children experience a balanced coverage of number, shape and space, measures and data-handling. Across the key stages, well-focused mental mathematics activities are used as an enjoyable and challenging introduction to lessons to consolidate the children's previous learning and to promote their use of the associated mathematical language. The teachers make use of a range of practical resources to engage the children ensuring that they are working at a level appropriate to their age, ability and aptitude; this is achieved through skilful classroom management. The school has appropriately identified the need to develop further the teaching of number throughout the school, focusing on continuity and progression, in light of the wide ranges of ability across the composite classes.
- The quality of the provision for pastoral care in the school is very good; the school environment is nurturing and inclusive with whole-school celebration of the children's achievements. The children benefit from the positive working relationships at all levels, the family and community ethos and the holistic support for each child. The children contribute to decision-making within the school, for example, for 'pupil of the month' and the choice of playground equipment. The children spoke of their enjoyment of school, their enthusiasm for learning and the opportunities for the extra-curricular activities, including the film club and sports.
- The school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, including hockey, swimming and football, thereby encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- Notwithstanding the early stage of development of the newly formed staff team, the acting principal and teacher work collaboratively and effectively to lead competently and strategically in their various areas of responsibility. There is very good communication, ongoing professional discussion, and effective collegiality amongst all the staff within the school. The staff have completed a one-year plan identifying the school's priorities and incorporating the significant amount of development work being undertaken across the school. A key focus of the plan is raising the standards in literacy and numeracy, guided appropriately by the associated action plans and internal school data. The staff have introduced recently a detailed assessment, tracking and monitoring system to analyse the children's progress and attainments.
- The recently established parent teacher association is at an early stage of development. The school has well-established links with the local community, including a day for grandparents to visit the school and joint sporting activities with local schools. The pupils of a local post-primary school coach the children in hockey, rugby and football.
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. There are aspects of governance to review, namely to ensure that there is a viable financial recovery plan for the school.
- 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. In discussions with the inspectors, the children reported that they felt very secure in school and knew what to do if they had any concerns about their well-being.
- It will be important that the employing authority, school 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.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address. The area for improvement is:

- to ensure a rigorous approach to planning, monitoring and the evaluation of learning and teaching in order to raise further the children's attainments.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor, through district inspection activity, the school's progress on the areas for improvement.

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