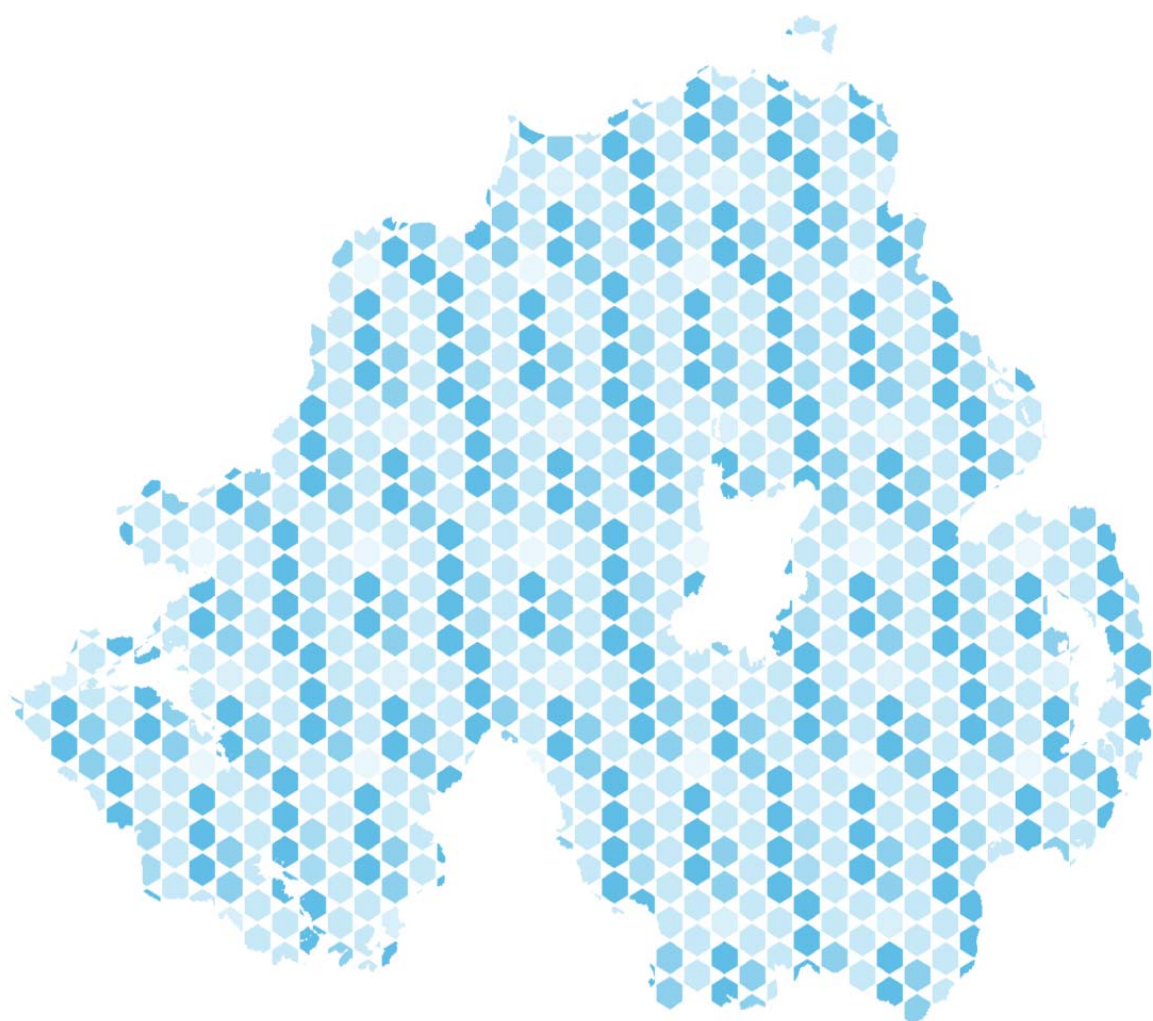


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Ballygolan Primary School,
Newtownabbey

Report of an Inspection
in March 2010

CONTENTS

Section		Page
	STATISTICAL INFORMATION	
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS	3
3.	THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING	4
4.	LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	6
5.	CONCLUSION	6
6.	THE NURSERY UNIT	8
	APPENDIX	

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%

In assessing the various features of the provision, the Inspectorate relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Ballygolan Primary School Newtownabbey** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 08/03/2010**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 101-0296** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Year 1 Intake	13	12	16	9	10
Enrolments					
Primary	121	98	100	92	57
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	26	26	25	26	25
Special Units	21	24	36	31	29
Irish Medium Unit	0	0	0	0	0

The enrolment for the current year is the figure on the day of notification of inspection.
 For previous years it is the figure in the annual return to the Department of Education.

The calculations at C and D should be based on the total of the primary and reception enrolments only.

- C. Average Attendance for the Previous School Year
 (expressed as a percentage): 95.5% **NI Avg Att: 94.9%**
- | | Primary & Reception | Nursery Unit | Special Unit | Irish Medium Unit |
|--|---------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
|--|---------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
- D. i. Number of Teachers
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 5.8 1 3 NIL
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 10.75 NI PTR: 20.4
- iii. Average Class Size: 9.6
- iv. Class Size (Range): 8 to 26
- v. Ancillary Support:
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- | | |
|---|----|
| i. Clerical support: | 25 |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support: | 15 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 4 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 31%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 44%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Number of families in School: 82
- x. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 44%
- x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2008/09 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics: **English** 44.4% **Mathematics** 33.3%

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Ballygolan Controlled Primary School is situated in the Whitewell area of north Belfast. The majority of the children who attend the school come from the nearby Graymount and White City areas. The enrolment has declined over the past five years from 121 in 2005/06 to 86 in 2009/10 inclusive; of which 29 children are in the special units. The units include a partial-hearing unit and a speech and language unit. In addition, 25 children attend the nursery unit. Approximately 44% of the children are entitled to free school meals. The staff have identified 44% of the children in the mainstream school as requiring additional support with their learning; half of these are newcomer children.

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy;
- the quality of provision for learning; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

In addition, the inspection evaluated the contribution of information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting and supporting learning. The school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection, were also evaluated.

1.3 THE VIEWS OF THE PARENTS, TEACHERS, GOVERNORS AND CHILDREN

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents and the teaching staff to complete confidential questionnaires prior to the inspection, as well as meetings during the inspection with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and groups of children from years 6 and 7.

Eighty-two questionnaires were issued to the parents of children in the mainstream; 14 were returned to Inspection Services Branch and of these six contained additional written comments. The responses from the small number of questionnaires returned indicated support for the work and life of the school.

Twenty-five questionnaires were issued to parents of children in the nursery; seven of the parents responded to the questionnaires and three made additional written comments. The responses indicate that the parents regard the nursery highly and appreciate the way in which the staff help the children settle into the nursery routines.

Twenty-nine questionnaires were issued to parents of children in the special units; eight of the parents responded to the questionnaires and two made additional written comments. The parents commented positively on the overall quality of provision and added that their children enjoy school.

Seven of the ten teachers completed a confidential questionnaire. These responses were mainly positive indicating strong support for the work of the school. There were no additional written responses from the teachers.

The governors expressed firm support for the work of the school. In particular, they commented positively on the quality of the working relationships between the children and their teachers, and the very good behaviour of the children.

The children in year 6 spoke with confidence about what to do if they have any concerns about their safety and well-being and reported that they enjoy participating in the after-school activities.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) has reported to the Principal and representatives of the governors the few concerns emerging from the parents' and teachers' questionnaires.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school and the nursery is good. The teaching staff, classroom assistants and ancillary staff work hard and provide an orderly, supportive and inclusive learning environment where the children are valued and respected. The strengths of the pastoral provision include: the exemplary behaviour of the children and their ability to work collaboratively with each other; the good use made of the corridors and most of the classrooms to display and celebrate the children's work and achievements; and the effective links established with external agencies to support the emotional health and well-being of the children. In the nursery, the strengths include the well-settled children, and the caring working relationships between the staff and the children.

There is a need to consult further with the children and parents when revising pastoral policies, and to monitor and evaluate further their effectiveness in the classroom to ensure they are implemented more consistently.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school and nursery have satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding the children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by Department of Education. However, the Principal does not currently provide an annual report to the governors on matters relating to child protection.

1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school and nursery give good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity through, for example, a well-attended breakfast club and affording the children ease of access to drinking water. In the nursery, the children are provided with healthy breaks, have visits by the school dentist and there are regular opportunities for physical activity outdoors.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The children's learning is enhanced by the use of visitors and the participation of the children in a variety of educational visits. Active links have been established with the local post-primary schools, and there are Education for Mutual Understanding links with a maintained and an integrated primary school. The children raise money to support charity by taking part in events such as the Northern Ireland Cancer walk and the annual school fair. The school needs to develop further the links with parents by encouraging and promoting greater parental involvement in supporting their children's learning.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

The children engage well with their teachers, work collaboratively in pairs and small groups and, when given the opportunity, talk confidently about the work that interests them.

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data over the past four years shows that in English and mathematics, the school's performance has been consistently well below the average for Northern Ireland. Compared with schools in the same free school meals category, the children's levels of attainment in English have fluctuated between just above and well below average, and in mathematics the levels of attainment have been consistently below to well below average¹.

At a whole-school level, the Principal and all of the teachers need to focus on improving the currently low standards of the children's work, and agree common teaching strategies to ensure that learning from foundation stage (FS) to the end of KS2 is developed more consistently and cohesively.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The overall quality of the provision for English and literacy in the school is inadequate.

Although the range and quality of the work in talking and listening is satisfactory, the teachers need to provide more effective opportunities for the children to explain their thinking and share their ideas.

In the FS and KS1, the children acquire basic reading skills through the development of phonological awareness and through shared and guided reading experiences. As they get older the children have access to a range of texts including fiction, non-fiction and poetry. An important focus is placed on the children's enjoyment of reading which is promoted by, for example, sustained silent reading. However, by the end of KS2 only a minority of the more able children achieve a satisfactory standard in their reading.

The standard of children's written work is inadequate. In the FS, the children are beginning to experiment with letter and word formation through play-based activities, but they have insufficient opportunities for experimental and individual writing. In KS1 and KS2 there is an over-reliance on worksheets and grammar and comprehension exercises that do not enable the children to develop extended written responses.

A more integrated approach to talking and listening, and reading and writing is required in order to match more effectively the work in literacy to the wide range of abilities in each of the classes.

¹ the key stage outcomes should be interpreted with caution for small primary schools as a large percentage change from year to year can often be attributed to a very small number of children.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The overall quality of the provision for mathematics in the school is inadequate.

In the FS, most of the children can identify and order numbers and a minority are beginning to demonstrate an appropriate understanding of simple number bonds. The teachers need to develop further the children's mathematical language and concepts through play-based learning, practical work and daily routines.

At KS1, the children use practical resources well to establish mathematical concepts and a majority of them are able to explain their work. Mental mathematics strategies are promoted and are linked closely, where appropriate, to the main lesson activity. In discussions with the year 4 children, only a minority of the more able demonstrated a good understanding of basic number, shape and space, and measures.

In discussions with the year 7 children, the more able had a satisfactory understanding of place value, number facts, estimation, and measures. The teachers need to make better use of open-ended, searching questions to promote, and develop greater flexibility in, the children's mathematical thinking. The standards that the children achieve in mathematics by the end of KS2 are inadequate.

At KS1 and KS2 the children enjoy mathematics; however, across both key stages there is significant variation in the teacher's expectations of what the children can achieve. In order to raise the standards, the teachers need to match the learning activities more closely to the ability and needs of all of the children. In so doing, it will be important to build upon prior learning and levels of attainment.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The long-term planning provides appropriate curricular breadth. However, there is significant variation in the quality of the teachers' medium-term and short-term planning. In the best practice, some of the teachers identify individualised learning that is matched closely to the needs of the child, they evaluate the children's progress, and use the evaluations to inform future planning. This successful practice needs to be disseminated throughout the school.

3.2 TEACHING

The quality of teaching in the lessons observed ranged from very good to inadequate, and was outstanding in one lesson. Although one-eighth of the lessons were very good and a quarter were good, over half were in need of improvement. The teaching and learning is not consistent enough to ensure all the children reach the standards of which they are capable.

In the best practice observed, the children engaged actively in their learning, there were opportunities to develop their communication skills through high quality interactions, and the outcomes were good. In these lessons, the teachers' expectations were high, learning intentions were clear, the levels of challenge and pace were appropriate and the individual children's learning needs were met effectively. In addition, learning targets were negotiated skilfully with the children, the plenary session consolidated effectively the learning and ICT was used appropriately to support teaching and learning.

The less effective practice was characterised by: insufficient planning for progression in learning; closed questioning which resulted in missed opportunities for the children to develop and explain their thinking; low level tasks and activities which lacked sufficient challenge; and insufficient differentiation to meet the needs of all of the children.

In these lessons the standards were too low and the children were passive, displaying low levels of motivation.

In order to improve the quality of teaching and learning the teachers need to raise their expectations of what the children can achieve, raise the level of challenge, and match more appropriately the teaching strategies and the learning activities to the needs of the children.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The teachers mark the children's work regularly and frequently, but do not provide specific feedback to the children on how their learning might be improved across the curriculum.

Information on the children's progress is collated and 'assessment sheets' for curricular areas have been developed recently which provide a framework for tracking the children's progress in learning. It will be important in developing this work, that the assessment information is used to support the children's learning and raise standards.

The school uses standardised assessment data to identify children who are in need of additional support. For example, the Principal has recently led the development of an intervention programme to promote improvements in the children's reading. In order to raise standards the Principal, in conjunction with the teachers, needs to develop the longitudinal tracking of the children's progress, benchmark performance against similar schools, and use the available data to set individual and whole-school targets. In so doing, it will be important to identify teaching strategies and learning activities matched to the range of ability levels to ensure that the children achieve their full potential.

There are clear procedures in place for keeping parents informed about their children's learning including formal parent-teacher consultations and written reports.

3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator and the Principal manage well the arrangements for supporting children with special educational needs. Assessment procedures provide an effective early screening of progress and are used appropriately to initiate education plans and identify those children whose needs are greatest and who would benefit from withdrawal sessions. Individual targets set in the education plans need to be focused more sharply on measurable, longer-term outcomes.

A minority of the children are supported through individual withdrawal sessions designed to improve their reading and mathematical skills and knowledge. The data indicates that most of these children make satisfactory progress from their starting points, although their overall attainment remains too low.

Seven children, aged 4-11 years, with significant hearing impairment, are taught in the partial-hearing unit. They make very good progress from their starting points as assessed on admission and as indicated in their statutory statements of educational needs. While their hearing disability, in almost all cases, remains a challenge to their learning, the children develop well their communication, literacy, and numeracy skills to a standard which reflects

the increasing pace of their learning. The children enjoy their lessons and importantly, demonstrate, through well-planned integration activities, improved social skills and confidence. The unit provides a valuable and much needed resource and is a notable strength of the school.

The children enter the speech and language unit (KS1) with significant speech and language difficulties and lower than expected levels of social skills. They settle quickly, gain in confidence and make good progress. The teacher and assistant have a good understanding of the children's needs and because of this, progress in communication, early word recognition and writing skills and personal development is good. This good foundation is not consistently built upon and developed at KS2 and, as a consequence, the children do not make the progress of which they are capable.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The quality of leadership is inadequate.

The Principal provides efficient day-to-day management of the school, and has demonstrated a strong commitment to inclusion through well-planned opportunities for the children in the mainstream and in the special units to integrate. However, he now needs to lead and support the teachers in raising their expectations of what the children can achieve and establish clear targets for improvement.

In addition, the Principal needs to develop a collaborative approach to the School Development Planning process, including consultation with teachers, governors and parents, taking account of the inspection findings and in particular making effective links between the assessment of the children's progress, and the associated target-setting processes. This needs to happen in order to meet more fully the requirements of the Education (School Development Plans) Regulations NI 2005 Order. Furthermore, a culture of self-evaluation needs to be developed in order to support the process of school improvement. In addition, there is a need to clarify roles and responsibilities of the curriculum co-ordinators and to develop their capacity to lead improvement in the areas for improvement identified by the inspection.

4.2 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The governors are highly committed to the school and the community which it serves. Although well informed about school developments, they need to become more involved in the school development planning process, including setting targets for improvement.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the exemplary behaviour of the children and their ability to work collaboratively with their peers;
- the school's commitment to inclusion demonstrated through well-planned opportunities for the children in the mainstream and in the special units to integrate;

- the very good quality of the provision in the unit for the hearing impaired and in the KS1 speech and language unit; and
- the good quality of the pastoral care and the effective links established with external agencies.

5.2 The areas for improvement include the need to improve:

- the quality of leadership, ensuring that the school development plan is adjusted in line with the inspection findings, and that teachers are led and supported in developing a culture of self-evaluation leading to improvement;
- the quality of teaching, and in particular for the teachers to have higher expectations for what the children can achieve, and to agree and implement teaching strategies that match the needs and abilities of all of the children; and
- the provision and inadequate standards in numeracy and literacy across the school.

5.3 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.

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

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

6. THE NURSERY UNIT

The nursery unit is accommodated within Ballygolan Primary School. The nursery provides one full time class. Since the last inspection, the nursery has moved from having 25 full age children to nine in their immediate pre-school year. The remainder of the children are underage children who will have two years of nursery education or more. The high number of younger children coupled with the current ratio of adults to children is impacting negatively on the overall quality of the pre-school provision.

The main strengths within the nursery's educational and pastoral provision are as follows:

- the children are settled, contented, responsive to the staff and their behaviour is good;
- the playrooms are spacious, well-organised and attractive;
- the staff are supportive and promote effectively the children's listening skills and introduce a wide range of language and ideas during group sessions;
- there is a wide range of play activities which promote satisfactory opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum;
- there are good links established with the parents, adjoining primary schools and other agencies; and
- the staff are hard-working and committed to the children's welfare.

The inspection identified areas for improvement. The following are the most important areas that need attention:

- the staff need to provide better opportunities and support for the pre-school children to enable them to progress in their learning;
- there is a need to improve the collaborative working between the staff team to ensure continuity in the children's learning; and
- the teachers need to develop further the planning and observations to meet the diverse range of needs within the nursery.

The nursery co-ordinator is reflective in her practice and works hard to meet the needs of the children with the resources currently available. While the nursery staff have attended in-service training, there has been little ongoing training and development in pre-school education in recent years. There is a need for the Principal and all of the nursery staff to review the policies, procedures and management of the nursery unit to ensure that the children's learning is developed more consistently.

CONCLUSION

In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this nursery is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in learning and teaching and in leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively.

The Inspectorate will monitor and report on the nursery's progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON THE NURSERY UNIT IN BALLYGOLAN NURSERY SCHOOL, NEWTOWNABBEY (101-0296)

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	25	
Attending part-time	1	
Under 3 years of age*	13	
With statement of special educational needs		
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support 1 from other professionals for special educational needs		
At CoP stages 3 or 4**		
At CoP stages 1 or 2**		
With English as an additional language	4	

* On 1 July.

** The stages refer to those set out in the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	9
Average attendance for the previous year.	

2. Duration of Sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
8:45 am -1:30 pm	8:45 am -11:30 pm	-

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers		2
Nursery Assistants		
Qualified Nursery Assistants	1	

Number of: ***	
Students	
Trainees	

*** Total placements since September of current year

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued	25
Percentage returned	28%
Number of written comments	3

APPENDIX

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Paper hand towels and liquid soap need to be provided in the children's bathrooms

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