



*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**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Focused Inspection

Ballymacward Primary School Lisburn

Inspected: March 2009

CONTENTS

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

BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Ballymacward Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 30.03.09**
ii. **School Reference Number: 403-0573** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Year 1 Intake	15	12	11	15	16
Enrolments					
Primary	105	105	96	93	93
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Class/Classes	0	0	0	0	0
Special 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):

94.9%

Primary & Reception	Nursery Unit	Special Unit
---------------------	--------------	--------------

- D. i. Number of Teachers
(including the principal and part-time teachers):
(Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)

5

0

0

- | | | | |
|------|----------------------------|----------|--------------|
| ii. | PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): | 18.6% | NI PTR: 20.8 |
| iii. | Average Class Size: | 18.6 | |
| iv. | Class Size (Range): | 15 to 25 | |

- | | | | |
|----|--|------|--|
| v. | Ancillary Support:
Number of Hours Per Week: | | |
| | | i. | Clerical support: 16 |
| | | ii. | Official Making A Good
Start Support: 20 |
| | | iii. | Additional hours of other
classroom assistant support: 50 |

- | | | |
|-------|--|------|
| vi. | Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: | 4.3% |
| vii. | Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: | 9.7% |
| viii. | Number of children who are not of statutory school age: | 0 |
| ix. | Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: | 2.2% |

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Ballymacward Primary School is situated in a rural location approximately seven miles from the city of Lisburn. Most of the children come from the surrounding community. The school's enrolment has fluctuated slightly over the last five years to its present figure of 93. Approximately 2% of the children are currently entitled to free school meals. The school has identified approximately 10% of the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning.

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on the quality of the work in English/literacy and mathematics/numeracy. In addition, the inspection report makes reference to the contribution of information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting and supporting learning and teaching in English/literacy and mathematics/numeracy. The inspection also evaluated the school's procedures for pastoral care, including child protection.

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 with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and a group of children from year 6. Fifty-seven questionnaires were issued to parents; approximately 65% of these were returned to the Department of Education (DE) and 13 contained written comments. Almost all of the responses from the parental questionnaires indicate that the parents feel their children are well cared for and value the dedication of all the staff who work in the school. Four of the teachers responded to the online questionnaire and two commented on the positive working relationships throughout the school. The governors were very supportive of all aspects of the work of the school; in particular, they recognise the school's caring, family atmosphere. The children in year 6 talked positively about many aspects of school life and said they are happy in school. There is evidence from the discussions that they know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being. The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) has reported to the Principal and the governors the main issues emerging from the questionnaires.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The provision for pastoral care is very good. A family ethos pervades the school and the well-being of the staff and the children is given a strong and appropriate priority. There are strong links maintained with parents through the 'Friends of Ballymacward Primary School'. The school liaises with a variety of other schools both through the Education for Mutual Understanding programme and through its involvement in the Comenius Programme where links have been developed with schools in Spain and Romania. The children also benefit from involvement in 'School Choir of the Year' competitions and clubs such as the Judo Academy and a Wild Watch club, in liaison with the Ulster Wildlife Trust.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by DE. It is appropriate that the school has made arrangements for a representative from the governors to avail of updated child protection training as soon as possible.

1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. The children have access to healthy breaks and opportunities for sports coaching. All the school initiatives combine well to encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

The children generally settle well to their work and display a positive attitude to learning. They engage readily in discussions and respond appropriately to the teacher. The children work co-operatively in group and paired activities and are capable of sustained periods of concentrated effort in line with their age. The teachers develop the children's self-help skills to promote independent learning. The children in the foundation stage (FS) enrich and develop their literacy and mathematical skills through effective play-based learning. In the literacy and numeracy lessons observed, the children made choices on how they recorded their written work. In addition, the majority of children were encouraged to reflect, discuss and make connections in their learning through purposeful thematic work across the areas of learning.

2.2 STANDARDS

The overall quality of the children's work in both literacy and numeracy is of a consistently good quality. A range of performance data, held by the school, indicates that by year 7, the majority of the children achieve good standards, commensurate with their ability, in English and mathematics.

2.3 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The quality of provision for English and literacy is good. The literacy co-ordinator has worked effectively in auditing the school's provision for writing and has made a good start to analysing data and tracking the children's progress and development. There is a need to define more clearly the co-ordinator's role in monitoring and evaluating the school's literacy action plans.

In the FS and key stage (KS) 1, activities such as play-based learning, songs and rhymes, modelled and shared reading sessions enhance the children's oral skills and help develop their confidence. In all of the classes observed, effective questioning was used to develop the children's oral responses and when given the opportunity, the children express their thoughts and ideas confidently and articulately.

The children enjoy reading and show a keen interest in books; for example, the children in FS respond positively to the use of 'Big Books' and the older children participate in an Independent Reading Programme. The school has invested in commercial reading schemes, part funded by the 'Friends of Ballymacward Primary School' and these are supplemented by an appropriate range of fiction and non-fiction books from class libraries. There is also a central library area containing a comprehensive selection of mostly reference books. Enjoyment of reading is further promoted through book fairs and visits from local writers. The school has introduced a systematic approach to the acquisition of reading skills which includes shared, guided and independent reading, and phonological awareness is developed through a phonics and spelling system. By the end of KS2, most of the children are reading to a good standard.

The school has adopted a systematic and coherent approach to the teaching of writing. Individual whiteboards and writing frames are used to support early writing and opportunities for independent writing are promoted in play-based learning activities. By the end of KS1, the majority of children can express their ideas appropriately. The children are provided with opportunities to write for a variety of purposes and audiences across the curriculum. Information and communication technology is used effectively to encourage the children to edit and redraft their work and the children also make ready use of dictionaries and thesauri. The KS2 children's learning experiences are also enhanced through involvement in the digital curriculum where the production of short animations promotes the skills of editing, story-boarding and script-writing. While the current focus on implementing key aspects of assessment for learning, such as the use of learning intentions and success criteria, is beginning to impact positively on the quality of writing, there is a need for a more consistent implementation of elements such as marking for improvement, self and peer assessment.

2.4 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The overall quality of the provision for mathematics and numeracy is good. The children's mathematical knowledge, skills, and understanding are developed systematically throughout the school. All of the teachers promote effectively the use of mental strategies and the use of practical materials to ensure that the children are motivated and engaged in their learning. The school's in-service development work, led by the mathematics co-ordinator, has succeeded in raising the profile of mental working and the use of games, visual images and concrete materials. In the majority of lessons observed, the children were given appropriate opportunities to apply their learning to problem-solving and investigative activities. Further, ICT is used effectively to reinforce the children's understanding of a wide range of mathematical operations.

By year 7, the majority of children have a good mathematical understanding, including place value, calculating, estimating and measuring, presenting and interpreting data, and knowledge of the properties of a variety of two-dimensional (2D) and 3D shapes. They use the language of mathematics competently and confidently; the majority of the children can explain clearly their reasoning and demonstrate their mathematical flexibility.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The quality of the medium-term planners for all teachers is of a good standard and they provide useful guidance for teaching. The evolving planning formats focus clearly on the intended learning and activities. The teachers need to indicate in greater detail the opportunities for differentiated learning. Teachers evaluate their planning; in the most effective practice these evaluations inform future planning.

3.2 TEACHING

The quality of teaching is always satisfactory: in almost two-thirds of the lessons observed the teaching was very good. In the best practice, the expected learning intentions and the success criteria were outlined clearly and succinctly at the start of the lesson, reiterated when appropriate during the lesson, and evaluated effectively at the lesson's conclusion. The children were able to talk about what they had learned. This good practice needs to be applied more consistently throughout the school. On the small number of occasions when the teaching was less effective, the learning intentions were unclear, the quality of the teachers' questioning was limited in extracting the full potential of the learning from the activities provided for the children and insufficient time was given to consolidate the learning. In all of the classes, the teachers and classroom assistants are good at managing the children's behaviour. They are supportive and reassuring and create a calm and settled environment for learning.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The school has made a useful start to involving the children in setting individual learning targets through the development of the assessment for learning approaches. While the teachers mark the children's work regularly, the most effective practice provides the children with helpful feedback corresponding with the learning intentions and the success criteria used in class lessons indicating to them how to improve their work. There is a need for all staff to apply consistently this approach to the marking of the children's work. The parents are kept well informed of their children's progress through parental interviews and a written report which provide a useful basis for the children's future learning. The school maintains information and performance data on the children's progress.

3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The school has identified approximately 10% of the children as being in need of additional learning support in English and mathematics. Appropriate education plans are maintained in co-operation with the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), class teacher and parents. The children make good progress with aspects of their learning; the support is provided in a sensitive manner which is appropriate to their needs within the classroom setting.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The long-serving, teaching Principal has been in post for 16 years. She is a very good role-model for curricular development regarding the revised Northern Ireland Curriculum (NIC). Her commitment to the life and work of the school and her concern and care for the health and well-being of both the children and the staff are clearly evident. The Principal is ably supported by the Vice-principal; there is a collegiate approach to all pastoral care and curricular provision throughout the school.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The current literacy, numeracy and assessment for learning action plans are good. The literacy and numeracy co-ordinators have made a useful beginning to self-evaluation through their respective areas of learning; the analysis of the children's performance data has been used to identify appropriate areas for improvement in the children's attainment. In order to meet fully the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005, the action plans relating to the school development plan (SDP) need to indicate the further development of their co-ordinator roles to monitor and evaluate in greater rigour the consistency of the teachers' planning and the quality of the children's learning experiences.

4.3 STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The staff have benefited from their involvement in the staff development programme regarding aspects of numeracy and linguistic phonics and are beginning to disseminate and implement many aspects of the NIC training. They have commented favourably on the quality of the support received from the South-Eastern Education and Library Board's Curriculum Advisory and Support Service.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the high quality of the pastoral care provision which fosters successfully very good working relationships at all levels;
- the well-behaved children who are motivated, responsive and achieve good standards in literacy and numeracy;
- the effective integration of ICT to support the children's learning experiences;
- the quality of the teaching, the majority of which is very good;
- the Principal's effective leadership in developing collegiate decision-making; and
- the significant contribution to the life and work of the school made by the classroom assistants and the members of the governors.

5.2 The areas for improvement include:

- the need to develop further the leadership and management roles of the co-ordinators to provide a sharper focus on monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning.

5.3 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 areas for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address.

The Inspectorate will monitor the school's progress on the areas for improvement.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2009

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the DE website: www.deni.gov.uk or may be obtained from the Inspection Services Branch, Department of Education, Rathgael House, 43 Balloo Road, Bangor, Co Down BT19 7PR.