



Providing Inspection Services for

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



Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

**Abbots Cross Primary School
Newtownabbey**

December 2015

FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF ABBOTS CROSS PRIMARY SCHOOL, NEWTOWNABBEY, BT37 9QW (301-0862)

The original inspection of Abbots Cross Primary School carried out in February 2014 concluded that in most of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided in this school was satisfactory; the strengths outweighed the areas for improvement.¹ The inspection identified areas for improvement in relation to leadership and management which needed to be addressed if the needs of all of the children were to be met more effectively.

The inspection identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- to build upon the effective leadership and management demonstrated by the key co-ordinators through more rigorous evaluation of the outcomes of the work, to ensure that all of the children attain the highest possible standards; and
- for the principal to provide effective strategic leadership.

The action plans received by the Department of Education following the inspection were of a good quality and adjusted appropriately in light of the feedback given by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI).

The ETI carried out two monitoring visits during 2014 and 2015 and conducted a follow-up inspection in December 2015.

In the interval since the original inspection, the following key actions and changes which affect the work of the school have taken place:

- there have been significant changes to the staffing and subsequent changes in the allocation of key roles and responsibilities;
- at the time of the follow-up inspection, the vice-principal had been acting-up in the role of principal for four months;
- a new senior leadership team, safeguarding team and curricular teams have been established; and
- the staff have received professional development and support from the Curriculum Advisory and Support Services (CASS) of the Education Authority in a number of areas including literacy, numeracy, governance and, leadership and management.

Key findings

- The establishment of teams with clear roles and responsibilities is providing a more effective structure and strategic direction for the leadership and management within the school.
- The acting principal is leading very effectively a wide range of improvements including communication and consultation processes and a more confident, collegial and effective approach to school improvement.

¹ In 2015-16, the ETI changed the conclusions for the overall effectiveness of a school. The equivalent conclusion would be the school needs to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners.

- The co-ordinators provide effective leadership within their areas of responsibility; the effective analysis of a wide range of internal data and qualitative evidence, such as, the teachers' observations of practice are used well to inform learning and teaching, the priorities for improvement and associated staff development.
- The children's work and the standards they achieve are tracked comprehensively from foundation stage through to the end of key stage two. The targets set are measurable and focused clearly on raising standards.
- The significant work focused on the internal moderation of standards by the whole staff, led by the acting principal, is having a very positive impact on linking effectively the teachers' planning and evaluations more closely to the children's levels of progression in learning. There is more effective assessment for learning including the teachers' marking and target setting to guide the children in improving further their work.
- The quality of learning and teaching observed during the follow-up process remains at a high standard; the improvements in the consistency of effective questioning to promote thinking skills, cross- curricular links in learning and the quality of the learning environment reflect the increased sharing of best practice among the staff. Improvements are evident also in the quality and extent of the children's writing across the curriculum which has been a key focus of staff development and the monitoring and evaluation processes.
- The children are more involved in making decisions about issues which affect them through the school council and additional procedures have been established to give the children more independence to access advice regarding personal matters.
- There is a more rigorous overview and effective evaluation of the range of programmes and initiatives being used in the school to support children and their families in raising further the standards.
- The parents are engaged more actively in the life and work of the school, in particular, through the recently re-established Parent-Teachers' Association, opportunities to observe teaching approaches provided by the special educational needs co-ordinator and the family learning hub.
- The governors have engaged in relevant training and are more aware of their challenge function in relation to raising further the children's standards of attainment and effective leadership and management.

Overall effectiveness

There have been improvements in the children's achievements and standards, the provision for learning and the leadership and management of the acting principal and co-ordinators. The school needs to continue to address an important area for improvement in the interest of the learners. The area for improvement is the need:

- for the principal to provide effective leadership.

The Education Authority, governors and principal need to work together to bring about the necessary improvements.

The ETI will conduct a further follow- up inspection in 12-18 months.

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