

EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE

PRIMARY INSPECTION

Woodburn Primary School, Carrickfergus,
County Antrim

Controlled co-educational, DE Ref No: 301-0696

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in October 2022



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Department of Education
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Follow-up to the inspection of Woodburn Primary School, Carrickfergus, County Antrim, BT38 9AB

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a follow-up inspection (FUI) of Woodburn Primary School in October 2018¹ where the quality of the leadership and management was evaluated as good. Owing to action short of strike, ETI was unable to evaluate fully the impact of actions taken and the extent to which the following areas for improvement had been addressed:

- the staff's shared understanding of the requirements of the statutory Northern Ireland Curriculum and of high-quality learning and teaching;
- the improved quality of the children's learning experiences and outcomes in literacy and numeracy;
- the effective development of leadership within the classroom; and
- the impact of the cycle of self-evaluation leading to improvement in the children's learning experiences and raising standards.

Consequently, there remained a need for Woodburn Primary School to address the significant areas for improvement.

The school's development plan and associated action plans were adjusted in light of the inspection findings and the feedback given by ETI.

ETI carried out a monitoring visit in May 2021 and a second FUI in October 2022.

In the interval since the initial inspection, the school has received external support from the Education Authority (EA) in relation to: building the capacity of governors, senior leaders and co-ordinators to monitor, evaluate and review aspects of provision and plan for improvement; and, developing a shared understanding of high-quality learning and teaching among all staff.

Over the same period, the key actions or changes which affect the work of the school include:

- a new school building opened in November 2019 before moving into the final phase of demolition and external works;
- the senior leadership team was re-structured;
- staff roles and responsibilities were re-allocated;

¹ [Woodburn Primary School follow-up inspection report](#)

- action plans were amended to reflect the relocation to a new school building and focus on new priorities emerging during both COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns and returning to school, including: targeted interventions through the Engage Programme, increased use of the outdoors for learning and a whole-school focus on maintaining safe routines, positive behaviour, and emotional health and wellbeing;
- staff accessed a range of relevant training relating to 'Calm Plan2,' the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act, trauma-informed practice and first-aiders for mental health;
- the school entered a shared education partnership with two other local schools; and
- the school was awarded the Green Flag Eco-school status in October 2020.

As a consequence of the external support and the key changes and actions taken within the school, there have been significant improvements in the quality of education as reported in the key findings below.

Views of parents/carers and staff

Twelve percent of parents and 41% of the staff responded to the confidential, online questionnaire. Most of the responses to the parental questionnaire were very positive and the written comments indicated high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school, in particular the approachability of school leaders and staff. The responses to the staff questionnaire were wholly positive and endorsed the commitment of all staff to the wellbeing and development of each child. The main findings, including a small number of issues arising, have been shared with the principal and representatives of the governors.

Key findings

The outcomes for learners have improved and are now good.

The children are keen to learn and engage well in their lessons. They listen carefully to their teachers and co-operate respectfully with their peers in paired and group activities. In whole-class discussions and in meetings with the inspectors, the children expressed their views articulately. As they progress through the year groups, their written work in a range of genres is increasingly mature and accurate. The children use appropriate mathematical language, have a good knowledge of mental mathematics strategies and apply them with confidence in problem-solving and computation. The school's internal standardised data indicates that almost all children are attaining in line with their ability, or exceeding expectations, in literacy and numeracy. Since the time of the initial inspection, there has been a significant reduction in underachievement across the school and an increase in children performing better than expected. In discussions with the inspectors, the children spoke positively about their opportunities to take on leadership roles through, for example, the school council and eco-council.

The quality of the provision has improved and is now good.

The staff understand more clearly the requirements of the statutory Northern Ireland Curriculum and now provide more opportunities for the children to engage in practical and problem-solving activities set in real-life contexts. These activities help the children appreciate the relevance of their learning. During the follow-up inspection, the quality of the learning and teaching was good or better; the children engaged positively throughout the lessons and contributed confidently in appropriately challenging activities. A group of year 6 children, who met with the inspectors, spoke enthusiastically about the practical activities they particularly enjoyed in school and their opportunities to engage in enquiry-based learning.

The teachers now reflect individually and collegially on their own practice, on a range of quantitative and qualitative data and on the children's progress. Their evaluations inform effectively the next stages of medium- and short-term planning, enable teachers to assess the children's achievements and needs and provide suitable differentiation, in particular for those identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning. The individual education plans identify appropriate short- and longer-term targets for the children, along with clear, practical teaching strategies. A range of well-targeted interventions also supports those children who require additional support with aspects of their learning.

The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and action to promote improvement have improved further and are now very good.

The senior leaders articulate a clear strategic vision and have fostered a whole-school culture of self-evaluation leading to improvement. They work collegially and cohesively alongside the other curricular co-ordinators and link governors to enhance key aspects of the provision and improve the children's learning experiences. The school's processes for monitoring and internal standardisation are consistently rigorous and enable the teachers to identify and address underachievement when it occurs, supporting the children's progress. As a consequence, action-planning is practical and purposeful. The Education Authority (EA), assured of the increased capacity in senior and middle leadership, has not only withdrawn its support, but also indicated that this leadership team is well equipped to support the development of others.

The governors have benefitted from the EA's support and have been highly supportive of both the senior leaders and staff during the follow-up process. They are well informed about the priorities for school improvement and involved actively in reviewing the impact of the senior leaders' and co-ordinators' action plans. Based on the evidence presented at the time of the follow-up inspection, there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated.

Overall effectiveness

Woodburn Primary School now demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interests of all the learners. ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement in:

- developing further and disseminating high-quality learning and teaching in order to sustain the improvements in the provision and standards attained by the children.

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