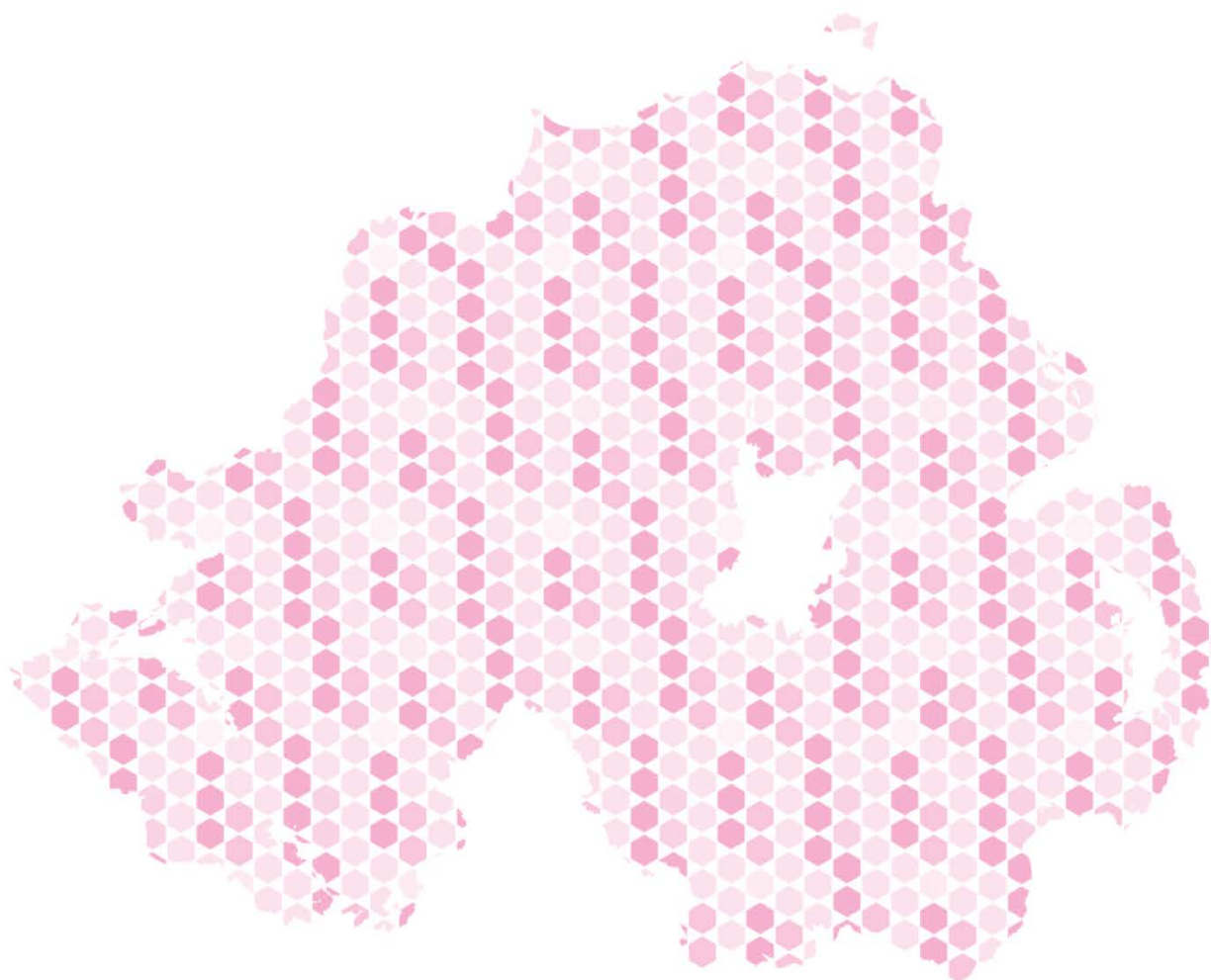


Education and Training Inspectorate INDEPENDENT SCHOOL INSPECTION



Ballymoney Independent Christian School, Ballymoney, County Antrim

DE Ref No (IS33)

Report of an Inspection in November 2019

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1. Context

Ballymoney Independent Christian School is situated on Market Street, in the grounds of Hebron Free Presbyterian Church, and has been providing education in this area for 36 years. The accommodation generally meets Health and Safety standards. (See Appendix A)

The school is administered by Hebron Free Presbyterian Church under the authority of the Presbytery Education Board of the Free Presbyterian Church. Most of the children come from the town of Ballymoney and the surrounding rural area. Over the last four years, enrolment has risen significantly from 15 to 25 children.

The children are grouped in two composite classes: the first comprising years 1 to 3 and the second comprising years 4 to 7. There are currently no children in year 6.

Ballymoney Independent Christian School				
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Enrolment	15	17	24	25
% Attendance	94	95	94	N/A
FSME Percentage ¹	0	17.6	0	16
% (No) of children on SEN register	*	*	*	*
No. of children with statements of educational needs	*	*	*	*
No. of newcomers	*	*	*	*

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

2. Focus of the inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy, in particular, how the school is addressing low attainment and under-achievement where applicable;
- whether the accommodation is suitable and meets health and safety standards;
- the quality of provision in the school, with a particular focus on the implementation of the procedures for safeguarding and pastoral care; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

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

3. Outcomes for learners

- The children are responsive to the staff, contribute enthusiastically their own ideas in whole-class discussion and can justify their answers when given the opportunity to do so. They engage confidently with visitors. The children are generally diligent and work well individually to complete tasks. The younger children organise independently their own equipment and the older children make confident use of their dictionaries and atlases for reference.
- The younger children are developing a sound knowledge of basic number facts and of number patterns using practical equipment. They are given some opportunities to relate this knowledge to everyday experiences such as shopping. The group of children from key stage (KS) 2 who spoke with the inspectors completed calculations accurately and articulated their strategies clearly. They have a good knowledge of such mathematical concepts as number, shape and space, but their understanding and recall of data handling and measures is less secure.
- From the foundation stage and KS 1, the children are developing progressively their reading skills to complete straightforward comprehension tasks and understand fundamental grammatical conventions. In discussion with the inspectors, the older children read fluently, but with limited expression. With adult encouragement, they work out the meanings of unfamiliar words. While the children can write in a more extended form when provided with the opportunities to do so, overall their extended writing is not sufficiently developed.
- The children benefit from taking part in school performances and in special church events. Their learning is enhanced through their participation in community-based initiatives, educational visits and local shows.

4. Quality of provision

- A majority of the lessons observed were effective in enabling the children to make progress in their learning. The teaching staff explain the tasks clearly and provide good support to individual children during their lessons. They are calm, patient and encouraging with the children who respond well to this support. In the less effective practice, the organisation and planning of the learning and teaching needs to take greater account of the range of needs and abilities of all the children in the composite classes, including more opportunities for the younger children to use practical resources to consolidate their understanding and higher levels of challenge for the more able.

- In mathematics, the younger children use appropriately a range of practical equipment to help them in their mathematical calculations and recall of number facts, and to check their own answers. A commercial scheme for mathematics is used to support the teaching and reinforcement of the key mathematical concepts. While this programme provides a useful foundation, the teachers need to plan for more activities which enable the children to apply their learning flexibly in varied and unfamiliar contexts, to extend and consolidate their own learning and to ensure that new mathematical concepts have been grasped fully.
- The children in the FS and KS 1 develop progressively letter formation and basic writing skills. However, the whole-school approach to cursive writing needs to be reviewed if the older children are to be prepared fully for the transition to post-primary school. The teaching of English skills, through a commercial scheme, tends to focus overly on the children using accurate punctuation and grammar in closed exercises; it will now be important for the children to apply these skills more regularly in independent, personal and extended writing.
- The arrangements for the care and welfare of the children are very effective. There is a positive climate for learning underpinned by warm, respectful working relationships at all levels which reflect the school's ethos and support the children's progress.

5. Leadership and management

- The management board oversees the practical aspects of finance and accommodation, support the teaching staff and are kept informed about the life and work of the school by hearing directly from the principal. The administrator is involved in morning worship with the children and staff. He is knowledgeable about the safeguarding and child protection policy and practice.
- The experienced teachers hold third-level qualifications and attend, when possible, professional development courses in order to meet better the learning needs of the children. The principal has a full teaching timetable; she is dedicated and professional in her leadership of the school. She works closely with the assistant teacher who plays an active role in supporting the principal.

6. Safeguarding

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education.

The school needs to continue to review and update the safeguarding policies as identified appropriately by the staff and management board.

7. Conclusion

Ballymoney Independent Christian School provides efficient and suitable instruction for the learners². The school should continue to be registered to provide education.

² Education and Libraries Order (NI) 1986 Part IV 39 (1) c

APPENDIX A

Health and safety/accommodation

1. The management board of the school and the church committee need to carry out a risk assessment relating to the playground and access to the car parking area in the church grounds.
2. The management board of the school and the church committee have undertaken to have a full fire risk assessment carried out by an accredited external agency at the earliest opportunity.

Inspection guidance

The guide to inspection of independent schools is available at: [Independent Schools Inspection Guidance](#).

Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

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%

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