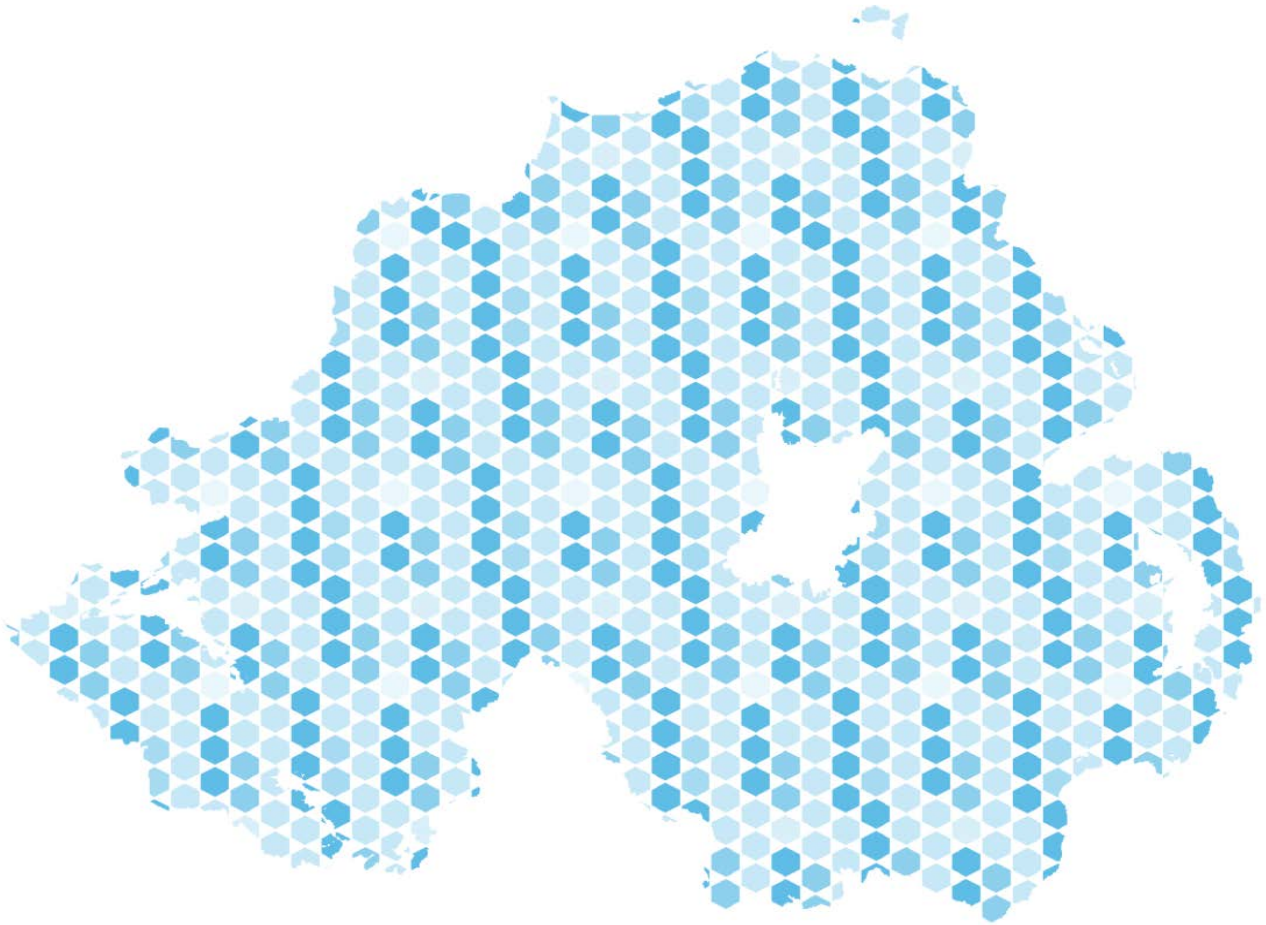


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Ballycraig Primary School,
Antrim

Controlled, co-educational

Report of an Inspection in
November 2016



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



Quantitative 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%

Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels when reporting on Achievements and standards, on Provision for learning and on Leadership and management:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the school:

The school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The school needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

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1. Inspection method and evidence base

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of primary schools, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self-evaluation* at: [Together Towards Improvement Primary | Education and Training Inspectorate](#).

Inspectors observed learning and teaching, scrutinised documentation and the children's written work and held formal and informal discussions with children, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with representatives from the governors;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Ten percent of parents and most of the teaching and support staff responded to the confidential questionnaires. All of the parents agreed strongly that their children enjoy learning at the school and staff help to address any difficulties they have with their learning. Parents indicated that the school is well led and managed; and it is well thought of in the community. The teaching and support staff responses were also very positive about the school and commented on the inclusive welcoming and pastoral ethos for all members of the school community. The ETI has reported to the principal and the representatives from the board of governors the main findings emerging from the parental and staff confidential questionnaires.

2. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all children, the purpose of inspection is, through effective linking of internal and external approaches, to evaluate the:

- children's achievements and standards with a particular focus on literacy (including how the school is addressing low attainment and underachievement where applicable);
- quality of provision for learning with a particular focus on literacy and including the nurture unit; and
- quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

Ballycraig Primary School is a controlled primary school situated in the Ballycraig Estate in Antrim. Most of the children attending the school come from the estate; however, recently children have begun to enrol from outside the immediate district. The percentage of children requiring additional help with aspects of their learning has fallen in recent years; and there are significantly fewer children in year 1 who are entitled to free school meals. The school grounds which have been extensively developed by the children, staff and the wider community to create an outstanding natural environment for learning and teaching, have gained numerous awards, including national recognition by the Royal Horticultural Society. The school is an ECO- school proudly in receipt of its fifth Green Flag award.

Ballycraigy Primary School	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Enrolment	139	148	143	140
% School attendance	95.88	95.61	96.5	N/A
% NI Primary school average	95.6	95.4	N/A	N/A
FSME Percentage ¹	52.51	50.67	52.44	44.28
No. of children on SEN register	64	63	49	58
% of children on SEN register	46	43	34	41
No. of children with statements of educational need	5	6	6	9
No. of newcomer children	*	*	0	*

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

N/A not available

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Achievements and standards	Good
Provision for learning	Good
Leadership and management	Good

5. Achievements and standards

- The children, across a very wide ability range, are making good progress in the development of their literacy skills, with most children achieving their literacy targets. They are well motivated and enjoy their literacy lessons. The children in the foundation stage and key stage one (KS1) are progressing well in developing their phonic awareness, word building skills and in using a good range of reading strategies. A particular strength throughout the school is the emphasis placed on talking and listening; most of the children are attentive, listen well and enjoy contributing their ideas and opinions during lessons and when making presentations. Those who require additional adult support with their listening skills, social and emotional development, respond well to the nurturing staff working relationships and effective strategies employed. They read a variety of appropriate fiction and non-fiction texts with increased understanding and can justify their opinions and ideas. By the end of KS2, the children can identify and use features of a range of different types of writing forms. The presentation of the children's written work is inconsistent and requires improvement. In a minority of classes, there is limited application of the children's writing skills to an interesting range of real life contexts across the curriculum.
- The children display positive attitudes and dispositions to their learning; they have high levels of engagement and collaborate well during paired and group work. As a result of the wide range of extra-curricular learning experiences, the children are developing confidence in expressing themselves and can converse easily with adults. There are limited opportunities for the children to develop their creative thinking and their own ideas in extended projects throughout the curriculum.

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

6. Provision for learning

- Almost all of the lessons observed during the inspection were good or better, with a significant minority being very good or better. Key features of the best practice were that the teachers used effective questioning and a range of stimulating resources to promote thinking at a deeper level, and encouraged extended oral responses from the children. There were effective assessment for learning approaches that were well integrated into lessons during plenary sessions and in the marking which enabled the children to reflect on and improve their work. In the less effective practice, in a minority of lessons, there was insufficient differentiation of planned learning and teaching, an over-reliance on tasks which limited the children's learning, such as, the completion of worksheets, and variation in marking for improvement.
- Analysis of the school's data and teacher judgement are used well to identify children's underachievement and low achievement. The staff are beginning to use this information to plan for individuals and groups of children. The use of the new individual education plan format guides teachers well to build upon a child's learning strengths. Under the guidance of the teachers, the classroom assistants make a significant contribution to supporting children to progress in their learning; a wide range of interventions are used well both during withdrawal sessions and in-class.
- In a majority of classes, the children are provided with a good range of planned learning experiences to develop their talking and listening, reading and writing skills. There are good opportunities to link these to relevant contexts, such as, making passports relating to the space topic, writing about experiences of mini beasts in the garden and writing extracts from a diary. The children develop confidence and communication skills through the opportunities to engage in singing, rhythm and rhyme in the foundation stage and in drama throughout the school. The introduction of whole school literacy events and the improvements being made to the library resources promotes well the enjoyment of reading. The teachers need, however, to have higher expectations of the quality and amount of work the children produce in literacy and embed it more consistently in interesting real life contexts.
- The nurture unit works successfully in partnership with class teachers, parents and others to develop children's confidence, management of their emotions and develop their communication skills, Reintegration of children into classes is managed effectively and children make good progress. The work in the nurture unit is helping to create a nurturing culture across the school.
- The quality of pastoral care provision is very good. The children develop empathy for their peers through the school's rights respecting ethos; they learn to understand and manage their own emotions through engagement in programmes, such as, PATHS² and 'Roots of Empathy'³; and, each class demonstrates generosity and concern for others through sponsoring the education of children in Tanzania, with whom they communicate regularly.

² PATHS: Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies: Early Intervention Foundation

³ Roots of Empathy programme: Roots of Empathy, Mary Gordon

7. Leadership and management

- The new school development plan for 2016-19 is underpinned by effective consultation with the school community. It identifies relevant priorities and provides strategic direction to guide whole school improvement. It has a clear focus on the learning and teaching of literacy and numeracy and the school is using well their performance data to inform learning needs. The senior leadership's decision three years ago to create a nurture unit has impacted significantly on the social and emotional well-being of the most vulnerable children. There has been relevant staff development to build staff capacity linked to appropriate priorities and there is evidence of on-going improvement. The action plans need to have clearer base lines and measurable outcomes for the children.
- A key strength of the school is the very good opportunities provided for parents and grandparents to be involved in their children's learning; examples include: 'Stay and Play' sessions, STEM⁴ workshops, and through the Department of Education's Signature Project for Shared Education, involvement of parents in their children's learning regarding literacy and numeracy. The Parent Teachers' Association has made a positive impact on the aesthetic improvement of the school environment for children, running social events for families and raising substantial funds. The school is enriched by its involvement with community groups including its senior citizens.
- The governors are closely involved in school life and communicate effectively with the teachers, parents and children. Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. There are aspects of governance to review, namely for governors to:
 - continue to develop their understanding of the children's standards and achievements through the wide range of data available, to monitor progress in learning and teaching.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. In discussions with the inspectors, the children in year 5 to year 7 reported that they are happy and secure in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their well-being.

8. Overall effectiveness

Ballycraigy Primary School demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners.

There are areas for improvement that the school has demonstrated the capacity to address.

⁴ STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

The areas for improvement are:

- to provide broader and creative learning opportunities for regular, extended writing across the curriculum; and
- to ensure that the action plans have clearer base lines and measurable outcomes linked to improvements for the children.

The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.

Health and Safety

1. There is a need to review the access to the school for cars and pedestrians. The restricted access and the limited parking facilities available are contributing to congestion and potential risk of accidents at the front of the school.
2. There are no visibility panels into several of the classrooms from the school corridors.

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