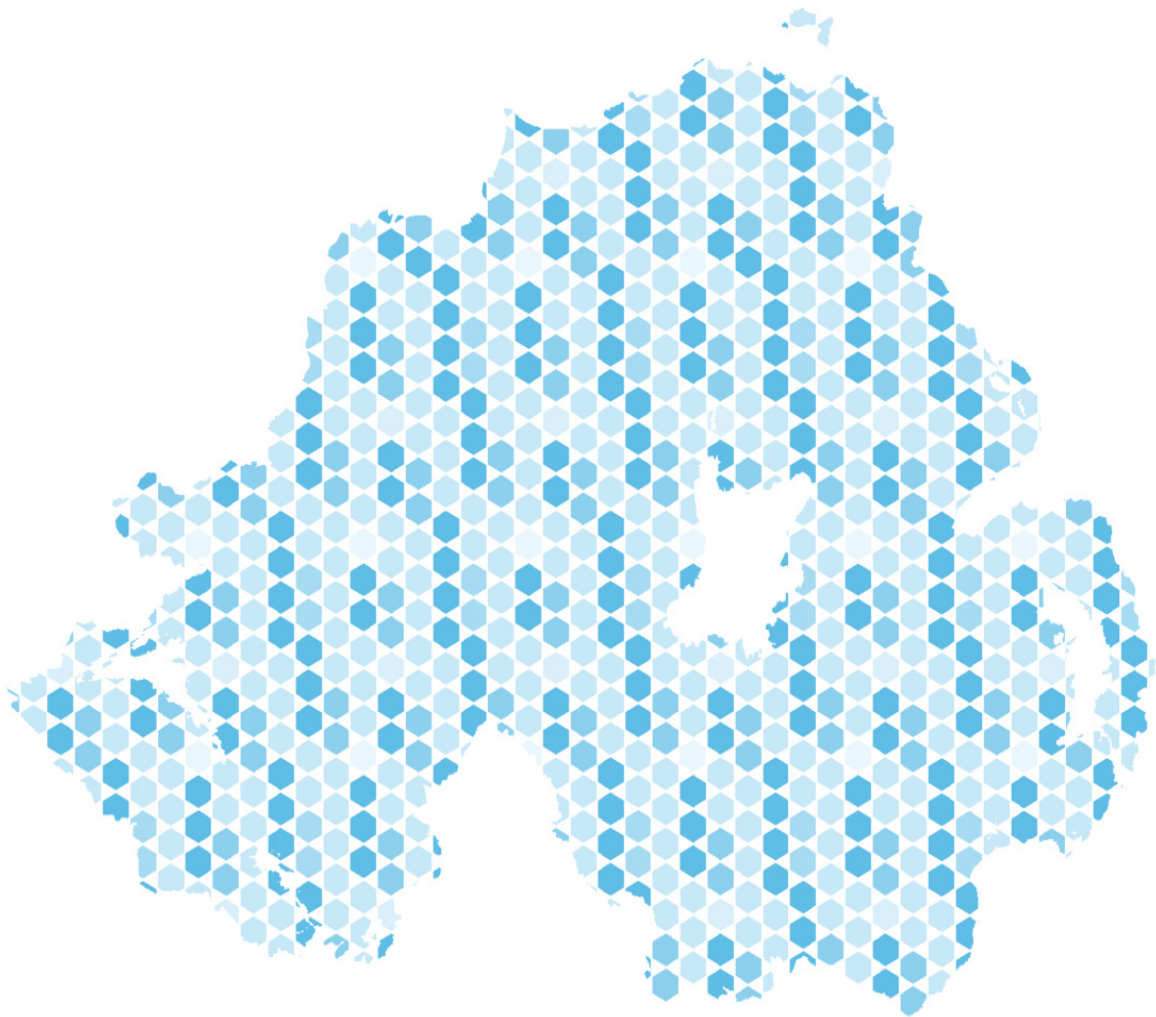


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Ballymagee Primary School,
Bangor

Report of an Inspection
in June 2011



CONTENTS

Section		Page
	STATISTICAL INFORMATION	
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS	3
3.	THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING	5
4.	LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	6
5.	CONCLUSION	7

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%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Ballymagee Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 06/06/11**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 401-6430** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Year 1 Intake	53	51	60	59	57
Enrolments					
Primary	403	404	404	411	405
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Special Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Irish Medium 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): 95.9% **NI Avg Att: 94.9%**
- | | Primary & Reception | Nursery Unit | Special Unit | Irish Medium Unit |
|--|---------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
|--|---------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
- D. i. Number of Teachers (including the principal and part-time teachers): 16 0 0 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 25.3 NI PTR: 20.7
- iii. Average Class Size: 28.9
- iv. Class Size (Range): 27 to 31
- v. Ancillary Support:
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- | | |
|---|-----|
| i. Clerical support: | 45 |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support: | 60 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 179 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 2.72%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 19.01%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 13.3%
- x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2010/11 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics: **English** 93.3% **Mathematics** 93.3%

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Ballymagee Primary School is situated in Bangor, County Down. The enrolment has remained steady over the past five years and currently stands at 405 children. Almost all of the children who attend the school come from the local area. Approximately 13% of the children are entitled to free school meals (FSM). The school has identified 19% of the children as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy;
- the quality of provision for learning; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

In addition, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning, and the school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection were evaluated.

1.3 THE VIEWS OF THE PARENTS, TEACHERS, GOVERNORS, SUPPORT STAFF AND CHILDREN

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents, teaching staff and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with the Board of Governors (governors), and a group of the children from year 6.

One hundred and three questionnaires were issued to the parents; 53% were returned to Inspection Services Branch. Twenty-one returns included additional written comments. The parents expressed a very high level of satisfaction with the educational and pastoral provision provided by the school and they acknowledged how well the school met the pastoral and academic needs of the children.

Thirteen of the teachers and twelve members of the support staff responded to the online questionnaires. Almost all of these responses were very positive and highly affirmative of the work of the school.

The very few issues raised through the questionnaires were shared with the Principal and the governors.

The governors expressed very strong support for the school. In particular, they commented on the very good working relationships they have with the Principal and the school community. In addition, they commented supportively on the Principal's vision for the future development of the school and on their desire to support the school in the improvement process.

In discussions held with a group of year 6 children, they talked openly about their experiences in school, highlighting, that their teachers provided good support at all times and if they were having difficulty with their learning. They stated that they enjoy their lessons, especially the opportunities for group work, and that there is a good range of extra-curricular activities and outings to enhance their learning. They feel that the school listens to their

views and commented favourably about the work of the recently formed school council. The facilities are, in their opinion, a strength of the school; in particular they mentioned the eco-trail and the work being done on recycling to make them more aware of their environment; and they talked about the various ways in which they can take responsibility in the school, especially the 'buddy' system which ensures that all children are involved in play during recreation. The children indicated that they are happy and secure in school and that they know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is outstanding.

The pastoral and academic provision is intrinsically linked reflecting the shared philosophy of the school in developing the children holistically. There is a family-oriented, inclusive ethos in which each child is valued and supported by all of the adults to 'become increasingly capable of making independent, responsible choices.' The well-resourced environment allows the children to work and explore together developing skills for living in, and making a positive contribution to, the school and wider community. The children's work and achievements are celebrated across the school, in the classrooms, in the corridors and in assemblies. The excellent working relationships at all levels develop a strong sense of community and interdependence underlining for the children the importance of listening to, and thinking of, others.

The planning for Personal Development and Mutual Understanding is well conceived to enhance the development of the personal and social skills of the children and complements their academic progress. The positive approach to the promotion of good behaviour is well embedded throughout the school; it supports effectively the children's sense of personal responsibility and self-management, resulting in confident and polite children whose behaviour during the inspection was exemplary. There are good opportunities for the children to develop their interests further through a wide range of extra-curricular activities, competitions and visits. The recent formation of a school council has allowed the children a more formal means of putting forward their views on the life of the school.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education (DE).

1.6 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The school has worked hard to develop its links with the parents and with others in the community. There are highly effective procedures in place to keep parents well informed about their children's progress. The parents receive regular newsletters and information about school events and there are opportunities for parents to meet both formally and informally with the teachers to discuss their child's progress, and in addition, they receive a formal written annual report. The annual reports on the children's progress are of a very high standard; they are detailed, informative and indicate clearly to parents how they can reinforce and contribute to the education of their child. There is a very active and supportive Parent Teacher Association, which raises funds to provide additional learning resources. Appropriately, the school has placed a strong emphasis on developing further the links with the local community.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

The children are enthusiastic and inquisitive learners; they engage very effectively with one another in small groups and when working in pairs. The children enjoy engaging in discussions and in challenging class activities during which they demonstrate very well their ability to think flexibly and complete investigations. They listen attentively to one another and re-organise their thinking and ideas in response to the contributions from their peers.

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data over the past four years shows that in English and mathematics, the school's performance was above the Northern Ireland average. When compared with schools in the same FSM category, over the past four years, the children's levels of attainment in English were just above the average, and in mathematics, the levels of attainment were well above the average.

The quality of the provision for children with special educational needs is outstanding.

Under the informed guidance of an experienced special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) the school identifies and diagnoses clearly the range of particular needs of those children who need additional support with their learning. There is range of withdrawal support to meet the needs of children at different stages across the key stages, including from the earliest years, and at the transition point between key stages. In addition to providing highly effective withdrawal support, the school aims to pre-empt some of the learning difficulties which the children might have by providing preventive special educational needs support. The school uses different commercial programmes, which have been well researched, and in which the members of staff have received training, tailored to the specific needs of the children. The SENCO has tracked the progress of the children carefully, and, on the basis of regular consultation and examination of data, the staff review the provision to support the work of the mainstream class teacher in order to ensure that the children receive the best support possible.

The Individual Education Plans (IEPs) provide good guidance for the class teacher, which is reflected in the thoroughness of the class planning and the provision for all of the children. The classroom assistants play an important role in providing well-focused support which enhances the work of the classroom teachers and benefits the children. The careful tracking of the progress of these children demonstrates that most of them make good progress, and allows the staff to review and, where necessary, adapt the provision.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The quality of the provision for English and literacy is outstanding.

The written documentation which guides all aspects of the learning and teaching for English is comprehensive and of a very high quality. The weekly and monthly planning provides an excellent framework for progression in talking and listening, reading and writing and ensures that the children's experiences are enjoyable, real and holistic.

The children demonstrate excellent talking and listening skills, and are developing a breadth of language to support their learning across all areas of the curriculum. They interact well with one another, collaborate successfully and listen respectfully to the views of their peers. Excellent working relationships and highly effective questioning by the teachers and support staff encourages all of the children to extend their vocabulary, take active roles, speak out with confidence, and respond with enthusiasm.

The children learn to read using a comprehensively planned and progressive programme incorporating a wide range of reading materials and methods to suit all abilities, interests and ages. The teachers make very effective use of a variety of strategies, including the development of phonological awareness, which are implemented consistently across the school. The enjoyment of reading is promoted further through timetabled silent reading in class, and visits to the school library. The school monitors and tracks the children's standards in reading through the regular analysis of standardised test results, which indicate that most of the children, by the end of KS2, are reading at a level at least equivalent to their age and there is clear evidence of year on year improvements.

The standard of the children's written work is very good and is frequently celebrated in attractive, creative and stimulating displays in classrooms and corridors. From the foundation stage (FS), the children are introduced to different forms of print and experiment with letter and word formation in a variety of interesting ways and are encouraged to write words and to express their ideas and opinions in simple sentences. In KS1 and KS2 the children's skills are developed further and they often write in a more extended manner responding to an innovative choice of themes, poems, school events and visits. The teachers' thoughtful verbal and written comments improve the quality of the children's writing.

The co-ordination and management of developments in English and literacy is undertaken by a team of teachers drawn from all key stages and led by a newly appointed co-ordinator. The teachers work effectively as a team and have enabled an open and honest whole-school approach to the development of the provision. A process of shared moderation of samples of the children's work has been established throughout the whole school to enable the teachers to draw out the implications of this process for their teaching, develop individual folders of progress for each child, review its effectiveness in raising standards and identify where children would benefit from additional support.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The quality of the provision for mathematics and numeracy is outstanding.

The school gives a high priority to the development of numeracy across the curriculum. Numeracy is prioritised within the school development plan and supported by an appropriate action plan which has a clear focus on learning and teaching and the further improvement in the children's standards and achievements.

The comprehensive whole-school programme clearly outlines the progression for each area of the mathematics curriculum and provides appropriate guidance for the class teachers to create their medium and short-term planning which is of an excellent quality. The teachers build effectively on the children's previous knowledge and experience and develop their skills systematically across the school.

The teachers set the learning in meaningful contexts which are based on the children's experiences and interests. They make effective and skilful use of routines and incidental opportunities to promote using mathematics, and integrate mathematics successfully across other areas of the curriculum. They give the children appropriate time and encouragement to communicate and explain their mathematical thinking, to articulate the processes they use, and to ask questions and to talk about their learning.

The children respond positively to learning and using mathematics; they take pride and interest in their work and value the contribution of others. The children in the FS develop early mathematical language, concepts and understanding through a range of well-resourced play-based activities. Throughout KS1 and 2 the children engage enthusiastically with practical problem-solving tasks and investigative activities. They work well in pairs and groups and apply their mathematical knowledge across the curriculum and in real-life situations. They talk confidently about their thinking and learning in mathematics, draw effectively on a range of mental mathematics strategies and are flexible in their mathematical thinking. By the end of KS2, almost all of the children achieve very good standards in mathematics.

The numeracy co-ordinator has a clear vision for the development of mathematics, focused on ensuring that high quality learning experiences are provided for all children. There are structured and effective systems in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of the numeracy provision and learning across the school, which include scrutiny of planning, team teaching, the dissemination of good practice and the effective use of data.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The quality of the teachers planning is outstanding; it connects successfully all areas of learning and contextualises them imaginatively within the children's experiences to address the requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. The plans are well informed by the appropriate use of assessment data and the teachers' knowledge and understanding of all of the children, to identify clear lines of progression, and detail appropriately, the intended learning outcomes and the teaching strategies to be used. The written plans are evaluated regularly and systematically by the teachers in order to inform future planning and take full account of the range of ability within the class.

3.2 TEACHING

During the inspection, the quality of the teaching observed in most of the lessons was very good or better. In half of the lessons observed the quality of teaching was very good and in almost one-third of lessons the quality of teaching observed was outstanding.

In the best practice, the learning intentions were clear and the success criteria were negotiated skilfully with the children. Planned and incidental opportunities for the children to talk about what they have learned, encourages them to organise their ideas and give very good extended responses. All of the teachers have appropriately high expectations of what the children can achieve.

Under the very effective leadership of the ICT co-ordinator, ICT is integrated well into the classroom practice. All of the classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards; these are used skilfully by the teachers to support and enhance the learning. There is very good use of ICT resources, including a very well-equipped ICT suite and the laptop computers within the classrooms to provide extension activities and challenge for the children.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

Overall, the arrangements for assessment are outstanding.

There is a well-embedded and highly effective culture of self evaluation in place throughout the school. The teachers make extensive and systematic use of a wide range of qualitative and quantitative data, including standardised tests and DE benchmarking information to monitor the progress and attainments of the children and to identify promptly those children who are underachieving or are having difficulty with aspects of their learning.

The teachers mark the children's work diligently and give evaluative and supportive comments to reinforce and develop further the learning. The children are taught appropriately to use a range of strategies to improve the standard of their work; they are involved fully in setting targets to develop their subject knowledge and skills.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The overall quality of leadership and management in this school is outstanding.

The quality of the leadership provided by the Principal, who has been in post for almost one year, is outstanding. Aply supported by the recently appointed Vice-principal, she has quickly developed a clear and shared vision for the future development of the school community which focuses appropriately on achieving the highest possible standards for all of the children. The effective outworking of this vision was clearly evident during the inspection, both in the children's learning and in the very good standards attained.

Led effectively by the Vice-principal, the subject co-ordinators analyse all of the data available from standardised and other tests on the children's performance in literacy and numeracy; this information is used very well well to set appropriate targets for further whole-school improvement.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The Principal, supported well by the Board of Governors and the whole school community, provides excellent strategic direction for the school, focused sharply on ensuring the continued improvement in the learning and teaching across the key stages. A key part of the future development of this work will be the use of the wide range of information already gathered, and analysed, to inform and support the dissemination of the very good or outstanding practice observed in most of the classes.

4.3 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The governors carry out their associated challenge function very well, adopt a proactive role in the school development planning process, and support the Principal and teachers well in raising further the educational performance for all of the children.

The school gives very good attention to and meets fully the requirements of the Education (School Development Plans) Regulations NI 2005 Order.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the effective links between the pastoral and academic provision which reflect the shared philosophy of the school community and promote improvement in the children's learning;
- the quality of the teaching observed during the inspection, with half of the lessons very good and almost one-third outstanding;
- the quality of the children's learning and skills, and the very good standards they achieve;
- the outstanding quality of the special educational needs provision;
- the very effective work of the governors who exercise their challenge function well in supporting the Principal and whole school community in raising further the standards achieved by all the children; and
- the outstanding quality of the leadership at all levels which promotes further improvements in the quality of the provision.

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The school has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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