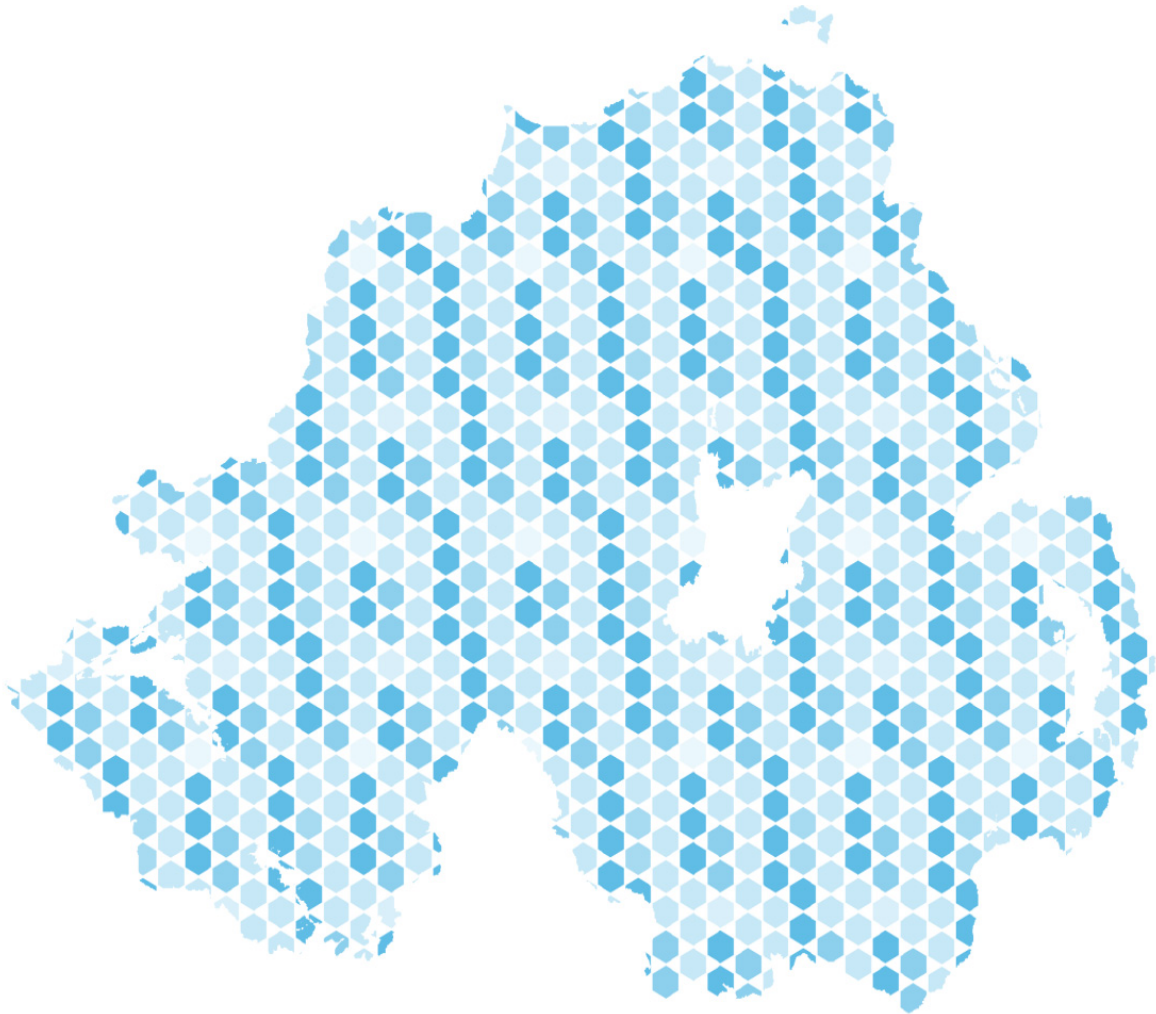


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Barnish Primary School,  
Ballycastle

Report of an Inspection  
in November 2011



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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: Barnish Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 07/11/11**  
 ii. **School Reference Number: 303-0800** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Year 1 Intake	9	10	12	10	12
<b>Enrolments</b>					
Primary	91	85	80	76	70
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): 94.1% **NI Avg Att: 94.7%**
- Average Attendance for those children on the Special Educational Needs Register: 94.2%
- |  | Primary & Reception | Nursery Unit | Special Unit | Irish Medium Unit |
|--|---------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
|--|---------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
- D. i. Number of Teachers (including the principal and part-time teachers): 4.56 0 0 0  
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 15.4 NI PTR: 20.2
- iii. Average Class Size: 17.5
- iv. Class Size (Range): 13 to 22
- v. Ancillary Support:  
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| i. Clerical support:  | 11    |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support:           | 20    |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 33.75 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 7.1%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 37.1%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 25.7%
- x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2010/11 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics, and Irish (in Irish-medium schools):
- |                |       |                    |       |              |     |
|----------------|-------|--------------------|-------|--------------|-----|
| <b>English</b> | 92.9% | <b>Mathematics</b> | 85.7% | <b>Irish</b> | N/A |
|----------------|-------|--------------------|-------|--------------|-----|

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Barnish Primary School is situated in the village of Ballyvoy, which is two miles east of Ballycastle. Most of the children come from the wider area surrounding the school, with the remainder coming from Ballycastle. Over the last five years, the enrolment has declined and currently stands at 70 children. Twenty-five per cent of the children are entitled to free school meals. The school has identified 37% of the children who require 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, the teachers and the support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and a group of the children from year 6.

Forty-three questionnaires were issued to the parents; approximately 53 % were returned to Inspection Services Branch of which 12 contained additional written comments. Almost all of the responses indicated a very high level of satisfaction with the work of the school. The parents appreciated the care and attention shown for the children's welfare by the hard working and approachable staff. They were appreciative of the way in which the school develops the children academically and socially and praised the after-school provision.

Five teachers and six members of the support staff responded to the on-line questionnaires. The responses affirmed the work of the school and the written comments highlighted a sense of teamwork, which works in the best interests of all the children.

The governors expressed strong support for the work of the school. In particular, they drew attention to how well the school's inclusive ethos supports the children's diverse range of needs and they talked with great pride about the children's achievements and positive dispositions to learning.

The children in year 6, including representatives from the school council and the school's peer mediation programme, spoke positively of their experiences at school, in particular, their access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities and their enjoyment of the fun aspects of their learning, including homework. They valued especially the playground

'buddy system' and described the school as a safe and supportive environment. Their views on a range of topics are sought, valued and acted upon, where appropriate. The children indicated that they knew what to do and who to turn to if they have any concerns regarding their safety and well-being.

The Education and Training Inspectorate has reported to the Principal and representatives of the governors the views emerging from the parents', teachers' and support staff questionnaires, including a very small number of issues that were raised.

#### 1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is outstanding. The staff, at all levels, know the children and their circumstances very well. The children's needs and welfare are placed at the centre of all that the school does. The school has achieved a higher level commendation as a "Rights Respecting School", and, more importantly, this is very evident in practice both from what the children report and how they interact and care for one another. They are involved, for example, in devising a 'classroom charter', which gives them ownership in establishing shared values amongst staff and children; this, in turn, ensures that mutual respect is embedded in a high quality learning environment.

Within the culture of an inclusive school which demonstrates a strong family ethos, the children are given many opportunities to be involved in decision making within the school and in developing a genuine sense of active and participatory citizenship. There is an effective school council, which gives the children a say in matters that affect them. The older children have been very well trained as peer mediators and are able to put their learned skills into practice as required when differences of opinion surface between other children. A well-devised "buddy system" operates successfully and provides support and reassurance for children who from time to time feel left out.

In their work through Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU), the children explore important issues including conflict in the world, the safety of children and the issue of child labour. They investigate environmental issues and, through letter writing and petitioning, have corresponded with a Latin American government on concerns over deforestation and the impact of this on the lives of the local people.

Of late, the children have begun to explore philosophical issues and are able to ask questions and write about the issues surrounding their spiritual development. There are very high levels of participation in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which enrich their personal development and learning experiences in sporting, cultural and social contexts.

#### 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.

#### 1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating. The children are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles through eating nutritious foods at break and lunch time. There is a good variety of after-school sporting activities on offer which provides the children with important additional physical development opportunities.

## 1.7 LINKS WITH THE PARENTS AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY

The school's links with the parents and the wider community are excellent. The school can demonstrate a wide range of links, which benefit the children's educational and social development. The parents are kept well-informed about the work and life of the school and they are consulted pro-actively for their views.

A significant strength in the school's links with the wider community is the very good partnership work it has developed with three other similar sized rural primary schools, with the support of the Primary Integrating and Enriching Education programme. This involves teachers engaging in joint-planning, team teaching and developing resources and experiences for the children that they might not normally receive if there was not a partnership. Of particular note is the collaborative work on 'Reach for the Stars', which resulted in all the schools engaging in a video-conferencing seminar with personnel from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration in the United States of America. Significantly, these links also involve the children engaging in other activities which allow them to explore and respect each others' cultural identity and traditions.

The school has very good links with the local post-primary school and joint-planning by teachers in mathematics benefits the children's transition from primary to post-primary education.

## 2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

### 2.1 LEARNING

The children are well motivated, confident and achieve good standards. They are very independent, respectful and have an excellent disposition towards learning; they are reflective in their learning and work very well in pairs and in groups. They respond particularly well to activities that challenge and extend their thinking and understanding. The children who need additional support with aspects of their learning take pride in their achievements and benefit from the withdrawal sessions and one-to one support. They work well alongside their peers in class and have good levels of self-esteem and confidence. They make good progress in meeting the targets outlined in their individual education plans (IEP).

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data over the past four years shows that in English, the school's performance has fluctuated with two years above and two years below the Northern Ireland (NI) average and the average for similar schools in the same free school meals category. In mathematics, the children's levels of attainment have been above the average for three out of the four years, when benchmarked against the NI average and the average for similar schools.

The key stage outcomes should be interpreted with caution for small primary schools as a large percentage change from year to year can often be attributed to a very small number of children. Furthermore, the context of this school is such that it has a high number of children who require additional support with aspects of their learning. The Principal has identified appropriately the need to improve standards further and has implemented a range of strategies to raise levels of attainment.

## 2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The quality of provision for English and literacy is very good.

The children benefit from a wide range of talking and listening activities, which develop effectively their oral language skills. In the foundation stage (FS), the children are given opportunities to listen and respond to stories and use appropriate forms of spoken language through play. In KS1 and 2, a good range of effective talking and listening activities is used to enable the children to express their opinions and deepen their understanding of what they have read and have learned. By year 7, almost all of the children can offer their ideas and viewpoints lucidly. The children are able to converse well with their peers and adults alike in a confident, articulate and sensitive way.

The school has a systematic approach to improving the children's reading skills. In FS and KS1, there is a good focus on developing the children's phonological awareness and on teaching them a good range of reading strategies. The children benefit from good quality guided and shared reading experiences. As the children progress through KS1, these experiences are built upon with more opportunities for developing greater independence in their reading. The school has invested recently in improving the quality and breadth of its reading stock and the children benefit from access to story sacks and develop greater independence, confidence and enjoyment of reading through an additional support programme, which the children respond to enthusiastically. The children talked eagerly about their reading and, by year 7, they are able to read with fluency and show a good understanding of what has been read: they are able to use appropriate strategies to help them with any difficulties they encounter in their reading. There are, however, a few missed opportunities to link the reading provision to more challenging writing and talking and listening activities, in order to raise standards further, particularly for the more able children at KS2.

The standard of the children's writing is very good in the FS, and at the end of KS1 and across KS2 it is good. In KS1 and KS2, the children are able to write in a variety of genres and for a range of audiences. The children use dictionaries in order to become increasingly independent and more accurate writers. Modelled, guided and shared writing strategies are used very effectively to develop the children's understanding of the writing process.

Information and communication technology is used very well to support and extend the children's literacy skills across the curriculum. From FS, the children use ICT confidently to support their learning and are very familiar and at ease in their use of interactive whiteboards and with software that supports and extends their development in English. It is used to help the children research, collate and manage information, communicate ideas and test their understanding of what has been read. The children participate in the revised Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment ICT accreditation scheme and the outcomes are good.

The literacy co-ordinator provides very good leadership. She monitors and evaluates appropriately the quality of the provision for literacy and has identified the need to improve further the standard of writing. The inspection findings confirm that this is an important area for ongoing development. The school has a good quality policy for literacy, which guides and supports the work well. There is a good range of documentation to support the work in developing the children's literacy skills, including a revised writing scheme. The school analyses performance data very well and uses this, alongside the teachers' professional judgement, to set targets for the children.



By the end of KS2, most of the children attain good standards in English; the children's books, demonstrated good year-on-year progression. The children in year 4 and year 7 are able to read fluently and talk about their reading with great enthusiasm and understanding.

### 2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The quality of provision in mathematics and numeracy is very good.

The children in the FS are developing their understanding and learning in mathematics well through a wide range of practical and meaningful activities. Through sorting, sequencing and matching, for example, they are able to identify and classify properties of shapes and to explain, using appropriate vocabulary, their own thinking. The children are learning to record the outcomes of their work in a simple yet helpful manner. Their work in mathematics is related well to the world they know through, for example, counting and sorting tasks involving familiar objects such as nuts, seeds and leaves from the local environment.

Throughout KS1, the children's learning in mathematics is developed progressively. They become increasingly competent in their use of number and are able to undertake computations appropriate for their age and to carry out simple problem solving and investigative activities. Again, the work is related well to the world the children know and experience; in an observed lesson on data collection, the children were able to collate quantitative information on the number of bedrooms in each of their houses and then to plot graphs using a suitable computer program. By the end of KS1, the children have a good understanding of place value and are able to add and subtract at an appropriate level.

The children's mental skills are developed progressively and well in each class. Typically, mathematics lessons begin with games and activities which serve to motivate the children and to extend their thinking and processing skills. In the best practice, the children are able to explain how they arrive at their answers. By the end of KS2, most of the children attain good standards in mathematics; they show flexibility in the way they work with number, know well the properties of two and three-dimensional shapes, are sound in their knowledge of number operations and metric measurement and view mathematics as something they enjoy.

The children use ICT confidently and competently to support their learning in mathematics. They are provided with an appropriate range of programs which are related well to the topic they are studying. They are competent as independent users with individual terminals and as collaborative users with their peers when using the interactive white boards which are a feature in each classroom.

The mathematics co-ordinator has been in post for five years and continues to lead well the development of mathematics. Through collaborative work within the school and with other schools through an informal federation, appropriate areas for current provision and future development are identified. Initiatives, including workshops for the parents and an after-school mathematics club for the children, are proving very useful additions to the overall provision for mathematics within the school. In developing further the quality of learning and teaching in mathematics, the school needs to emphasise more overtly in its action plans how standards in mathematics can continue to be raised for all; and in its provision, how the level of challenge can be raised for the more able children.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNERS**

#### **3.1 PLANNING**

The teachers prepare thoroughly for lessons and their short-term and medium-term planning for learning is effective. Connected learning is being developed well through thematic planning and the teachers infuse opportunities to develop the children's literacy and numeracy skills further, along with connecting learning linked to the 'rights-respecting schools' programme. A particular strength of the planning is the attention given to producing high quality teacher evaluations, which focus on the children's learning, progress and future learning needs.

There are very effective links between the teachers' planning and the support for the children who require additional help with aspects of their learning. There is effective communication between the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), learning support assistant, class teachers and classroom assistants which leads to early and effective intervention and ensures an appropriate support programme is put in place.

#### **3.2 TEACHING**

The quality of the teaching observed during the inspection was nearly always good or very good and the teaching is a strength in the provision. Half of the lessons observed were very good and a small number was outstanding. In the most effective lessons, the children were provided with relevant and challenging tasks that were matched well to their needs and developed well their thinking skills. The teachers asked good questions to extend the children's learning and provided very good opportunities to consolidate the learning during and at the end of the lessons. In a number of classes, the support staff, guided by the teachers, provided valuable learning assistance to the children.

The teachers are committed to inclusion and work very hard to meet the needs of all of the children. The teachers hold appropriately high expectations of the children's learning and the lessons are structured very effectively. They value the children's own contributions towards their learning and the children are given a voice in what they learn and how they learn.

#### **3.3 ASSESSMENT**

The school has undergone considerable development of its assessment processes for the children in recent years. It carries out regular and on-going assessment of the children's attainment in literacy and numeracy and, through matching this against the children's measured ability, is monitoring for evidence of under-achievement. Additionally, it is using this information gained to track the progress of all the children. Where individual children are seen to be at risk of low attainment or under-achieving, the school moves to address the concern either through support within the class or through special educational needs (SEN) provision.

The school reports the progress of the children to the parents on a regular basis. The parents attend a parent teacher discussion in October each year and receive a written report annually. The written reports are comprehensive; they are related well to the curriculum and provide the parents with detailed and pertinent information regarding their children's progress, any difficulties they have and link this with advice on how they may help their children further.

The teachers mark the children's work conscientiously and offer praise and encouragement for the effort and quality shown. There is scope to develop the quality of the marking further to include more consistently comments which indicate to the children how their work could be improved.

### **3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

The school's special needs register has 26 children identified which represents a very significant 37% of the whole school enrolment. Identification is made early and even minor concerns are recorded and a watching brief is maintained by the staff. Where education plans are required, these are well-devised with a good diagnosis evident of the children's difficulties. Targets are specified well and appropriate strategies outlined for how they are to be met. Increasingly, quantitative data from the assessment tests carried out with the children is being used, together with the teachers' professional judgement, to help identify children in need of support and to track their progress. The provision made to support the children is very good. Both within classes and through withdrawal sessions, the activities and support provided are matched well to the children's identified needs. The children on the register make progress in line with their abilities, and for some the progress is sufficient to enable them to exit any additional support. The classroom assistants and the part-time teacher with responsibility for withdrawal provision play a pivotal role in supporting well the children's learning and emotional development.

The SENCO manages and monitors the provision effectively and ensures that all relevant bodies, including the parents, are kept well informed about the progress of the children with special educational needs.

## **4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **4.1 LEADERSHIP**

The overall quality of leadership and management is very good.

The Principal provides highly effective strategic leadership and has a clear and broad vision for the work of the school. She has established a well-embedded culture of self-evaluation across the school. She maintains an overview of development work to bring about whole-school improvement, and is supporting and building the capacity of all the teachers as effective co-ordinators. The Principal gives a high priority to the pastoral care, welfare and holistic development of all of the children.

All the teachers have responsibility for the co-ordination of significant curricular areas. They have clearly defined roles and responsibilities and are knowledgeable, self-evaluative and confident in exercising their duties. There is very good internal communication and a strong sense of collegiality within the school.

### **4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT**

The school improvement process is linked closely to a school development plan, which is underpinned by effective self-evaluation, such as good quality termly reviews of the associated action plans. There is honest and accurate analysis of performance data, which is used to inform the action plans and there are good processes for consultation about the school development plan (SDP) within the school community.

The SDP meets the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.

#### 4.3 ACCOMMODATION

All the staff work well to create an inviting child-centred environment in the classrooms and communal areas. The standard of caretaking is very good.

#### 4.4 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The governors report that they are well informed about the work of the school and that they are consulted and have a say in such matters. They are very supportive of the Principal and staff in the implementation of the SDP. The school makes effective use of all resources, in order to benefit the provision for the children.

It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the children and the staff.

### 5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the children's high levels of confidence, independence and their positive disposition towards learning, underpinned by the excellent out-workings of the rights respecting school programme;
- the good standards attained by the children in literacy and numeracy;
- the quality of the teaching, which in the majority of the lessons observed, was very good or better;
- the outstanding quality of the pastoral care for the children, including the very good support for children who have special educational needs ;
- the highly effective strategic leadership provided by the Principal; and
- the excellent links and partnerships maintained by the school to give the children educational experiences they might not normally receive.

5.2 The area for improvement is the need:

- to raise further the levels of the children's attainment in literacy and numeracy by the end of KS2.

5.3 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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