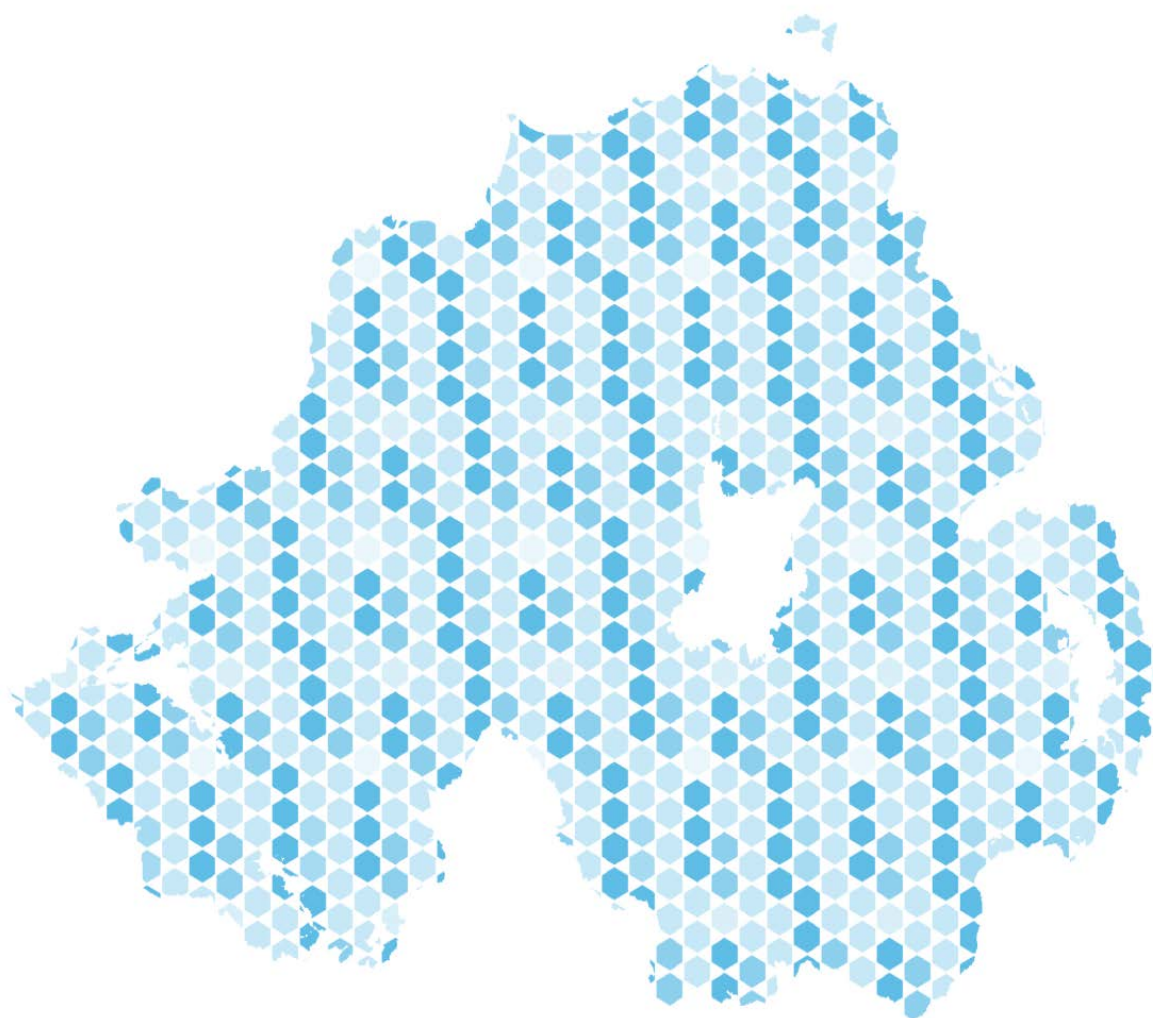


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Bloomfield Primary School
and Nursery Unit, Bangor

Report of an Inspection
in May 2013



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Inspection methods and evidence base

The inspection evaluations are based on evidence gained from lesson observations, from scrutiny of the children's completed written work and from a range of documentation including the school's internal performance data. In addition, the inspection team held discussions with groups of the children, with teaching and non-teaching staff and with representatives from the Board of Governors.

The views of the parents, teaching and non-teaching staff were sought through a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. The reporting inspector discussed any issues raised through the questionnaires with the principal and the governors. A summary of the outcomes from the questionnaires is included in section 6 of the report.

Quantitative terms

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

1. School context

Bloomfield Primary School is situated on Bloomfield Road South, in Bangor, County Down. The enrolment has increased steadily over the past five years, from 332 in 2008 to the current enrolment of 397 which includes 52 children in the nursery unit and 14 children in the learning support centre. At the time of the inspection approximately 54% of the children were entitled to free school meals and 31% of the children were identified as requiring additional help with aspects of their learning.

The school has experienced a number of key staffing changes within the past year, including the appointment of a new Principal, Vice-principal and special educational needs co-ordinator.

2. Focus of inspection and overall finding

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;
- the quality of provision for learning; and
- the quality of leadership and management, including the arrangements for safeguarding.

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

OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this school is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in standards, learning and teaching, and leadership and management which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively.

Summary of key findings

Achievements and standards	Satisfactory
Quality of provision	Satisfactory
Leadership and management	Satisfactory
Nursery Unit	Good
Learning Support Unit	Good

KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

3. Achievements and standards

The quality of the children's achievements and standards is satisfactory.

- The children are generally well motivated and enjoy their learning. In the nursery unit and Foundation Stage (FS) most of the children engage purposefully in their learning, and have good levels of independence and self management. As they progress through the school, there are insufficient opportunities for the children to develop these skills further, to engage in effective paired and group work and to manage their own learning.
- An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data over the past four years shows that, in each of the four years, the school's performance in English and mathematics, has been below the Northern Ireland (NI) average. When compared with schools in the same free school meals category, the school's performance in English has been in line with the average in two of the four years; in mathematics, it has been significantly below the average in each of the four years.
- A majority of the children attain satisfactory standards in literacy and numeracy. A majority of them read with fluency; they can identify the features of specific writing genres and produce pieces of writing which are of a good to very good standard. A significant number of the children, across the school, are not reading at the expected level for their age. The children's oracy skills are under-developed. In numeracy, a majority of the children complete written calculations accurately. When completing mental calculations they draw on a narrow range of strategies and lack confidence when explaining their chosen methods of working. They are insecure in their understanding of key concepts such as length and shape and in their application of mathematics within real life contexts.
- Most of the children in the school who have been identified with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress in their learning. The children in the learning support centre are making appropriate progress and achieve standards in line with their ability.
- The children in the nursery unit are well-settled, highly motivated and can talk about their learning activities and experiences. They make good use of all of the play areas and are able to engage in lengthy periods of concentrated and purposeful play. A majority of the children show imagination and creativity in their play; their drawings, paintings and constructions are often representational and show good attention to detail. A majority of the children have a good understanding of early mathematical concepts and can sort, match and count independently.
- The children entered in the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) ICT Accreditation Scheme achieve levels of attainment in line with the NI average.

4. Provision for learning

The quality of the provision for learning is satisfactory.

- The quality of the teaching observed during the inspection ranged from very good to inadequate. A significant minority of the teaching is good and in a small proportion it is very good. In almost one-half of the teaching observed there is a need for improvement specifically, in planning for the range of abilities within classes to ensure that all of the children make the progress of which they are capable. The use of assessment to inform planning, learning and teaching, including the use of written and oral marking for improvement, is underdeveloped.
- The programme for the development of the children's reading and writing skills is not being provided holistically within and across classes. As a result, the children's learning experiences are fragmented. In order to effect the necessary improvements in literacy it will be important for the school to adopt a more holistic approach to learning and teaching and to develop a more consistent, rigorous and planned approach to the teaching of reading, throughout the school. The school has identified, appropriately, the need to develop a programme for the progressive development of the children's talking and listening skills.
- A key feature of the provision in numeracy over the past two years has been the development of the planning and in-class support provided by the mathematics co-ordinator. It will be important for the school to evaluate the impact of this support on the children's learning and on the quality of the class teachers' practice. The whole-school programme for mathematics does not currently provide sufficient detail to ensure the systematic development and consolidation of the children's learning across all aspects of the mathematics programme.
- In the FS and KS 1, the provision for play-based learning is at an early stage of development. The Early Years co-ordinator has, appropriately, identified the need to build more effectively on the children's experiences, particularly the opportunities provided for the children in the nursery unit to develop their concentration and engage in a wide range of challenging activities in order to extend their learning.
- The quality of the overall provision within the nursery unit is good. The attractive and interesting learning environment promotes effectively the all round development of the children. The very good quality of the staff interactions with the children ensures that the opportunities for learning through the play experiences are well exploited. The staff need to review the methods of record keeping and assessment to provide a more accurate account of the children's progress and development both to inform provision throughout the year and to help inform their provision when they transfer to year 1. Aspects of the snack routine need to be reviewed to ensure all time is used more effectively to develop the children's learning.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school, nursery unit and learning support centre is good. This is evidenced through the inclusive ethos; the buddy system and the extensive range of intervention programmes provided for those children with additional learning needs. In the nursery unit, the staff creates a calm, caring and supportive atmosphere and the children's work is valued and presented around the playroom. In order to enhance the pastoral

care provision further, it will be important for the senior leadership team and staff to implement more rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluating the outworking of the pastoral care policies, particularly in relation to behaviour management and the impact this has on learning and teaching.

- The school places high importance on providing for the children with special educational needs. The children are catered for through a combination of withdrawal and in-class support by a large team of teachers and classroom assistants. The school has identified, appropriately, the need to implement a more robust system to monitor the impact of this provision on the children's learning and to track more closely the progress of all the children with special educational needs. The quality of the provision in the learning support centre is good. The staff provides well-focused, sensitive support to meet the needs of each individual child. The arrangements for the leadership and management of the centre need to be reviewed in light of the recent changes in management.
- The school, nursery and the learning support units give very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity through, for example, encouraging healthy food choices in the breakfast club and at lunchtime, and the provision of a range of curricular and extra-curricular sporting activities to encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.
- The quality of provision for ICT is satisfactory. Most of the teachers make good use of the inter-active white boards to stimulate the children's engagement in their learning.

5. Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory.

- The recently formed senior leadership team (SLT) are working well together to identify priorities for development within the school. The processes for self-evaluation to effect improvement, including the analysis and use of internal performance data, are at an early stage of development. The school development plan and related action plans do not identify or focus sufficiently on the specific actions to bring about improvement in the quality of learning and teaching and to raise the children's levels of attainment. It will be important for the SLT to develop further the processes for monitoring and evaluating the quality of learning and teaching within the school, including the impact of the various intervention programmes on the outcomes for the children involved. It will also be important for the Principal and governors to review the arrangements for the deployment of the teaching staff to ensure the most effective use of their expertise and to minimise the interruptions to the children's learning.
- The school and the nursery unit have well established links with the parents who receive information about policies and events in school life through newsletters and curriculum meetings. The school liaises effectively with a wide range of educational, health and statutory agencies in order to support individual children.

- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the inspection team's evaluation is that the parents, staff and school community can have confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are well informed about and engaged in decision making in relation to recruitment, finance and policy development. Their contribution to the life and work of the school could be further enhanced through the closer monitoring of the processes for self-evaluation, particularly in relation to the deployment of staff and to the impact of the various intervention programmes on the learning for the children.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school and nursery unit have comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

CONCLUSION

In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided by this school is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in leadership and management, standards, and learning and teaching which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively.

The main areas for improvement include the need to:

- improve the overall quality of learning and teaching;
- develop further the processes for self evaluation, including the rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the quality of learning and teaching, in order to identify and implement the key actions which will bring about improvement in the standards which the children attain; and
- review the arrangements for the deployment of the teaching staff to ensure the most effective use of their expertise and to minimise the interruptions to the children's learning.

6. Summary of questionnaire responses

PARENTAL QUESTIONNAIRES	
PRIMARY SCHOOL	
Number of Questionnaires Issued to the Primary school	107
Number of Questionnaires Returned	32
Percentage of Returns	29.9%
Number of Comments	16

NURSERY UNIT	
Number of Questionnaires Issued to the Nursery Unit	51
Number of Questionnaires Returned	20
Percentage of Returns	39%
Number of Comments	9

In both the school and the nursery unit, almost all of the responses from the parental questionnaires indicated a high level of satisfaction with the school. In particular, the parents reported their high regard for the staff of the school, the care and support provided by all of the staff for the children and the inclusive ethos of the school. The small number of concerns raised in the written comments has been discussed with the governors and the Principal.

In discussions with the governors, they praised the staff and the work of the school and the importance of the school within the community.

The inspectors also met with a group of year 6 children. The children report that they feel safe and secure in the school and there is evidence that they know who to go to if they have any worries about their safety, care and well being. The provision of the confidential counselling service is also appreciated by the children. They understand and value the school rules and the high expectations for their behaviour. The children spoke positively about their enjoyment of the learning experiences at school and their access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Returned	21
Number of Comments	6

SUPPORT STAFF QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Returned	15
Number of Comments	5

Nearly all of the teaching and non-teaching staff indicated that they enjoy working in the school and that they work effectively as a team; almost all indicate that they are fully involved with the school development planning process and feel that their contributions are valued by the Principal, parents and governors.

Health and safety

- The additional educational support room on the first floor does not have a vision panel on the door.
- The gates to the playground are not routinely locked.
- The front of the school leads on to a busy main road and presents a risk to children entering and leaving the school.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON BLOOMFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL NURSERY UNIT, BANGOR

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	0	0
Attending part-time	25	26
Under 3 years of age*	0	0
With statement of special educational needs	1	0
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	2	3
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	0	1
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	1	2
With English as an additional language	0	1

* On 1 July.

** The stages refer to those set out in the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	42.3%
Average attendance for the previous year.	92.49%

2. Duration of Sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
-	2½ hours	2½ hours

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	1	0
Nursery Assistants (qualified)	1	1
Nursery Assistants (non-qualified)	0	0

Number of: ***	
Students	3
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued	51
Percentage returned	39%
Number of written comments	9

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