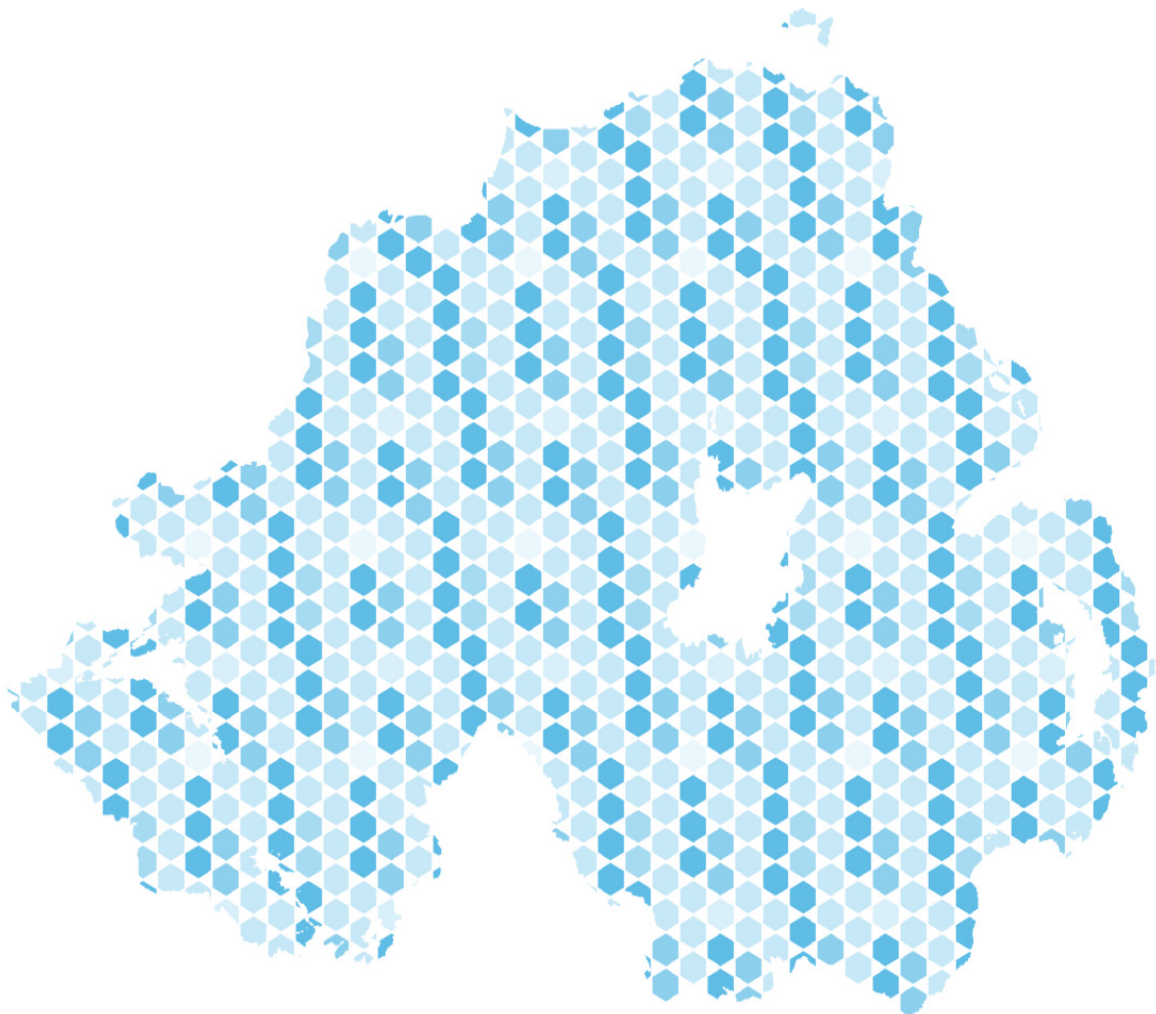


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Howard Primary School,
Dungannon

Report of an Inspection
in May 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: Howard Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 09/05/11**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 501-2646** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Year 1 Intake	22	27	36	43	41
Enrolments					
Primary	201	208	217	234	239
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): 95.8% **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): (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours) | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): | 21.72 | NI PTR: 20.7 | | |
| iii. Average Class Size: | 23.9 | | | |
| iv. Class Size (Range): | 18 to 31 | | | |
| v. Ancillary Support: Number of Hours Per Week : | | | | |
| i. Clerical support: | | | | 31.25 |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support: | | | | 40 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | | | | 86.25 |
| vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: | | | | 2.1% |
| vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: | | | | 18% |
| viii. Number of children who are not of statutory school age: | | | | 0 |
| ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: | | | | 9.6% |
| x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2009/10 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics: | English
91.89% | Mathematics
97.3% | | |

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Howard Primary School is situated on the outskirts of Dungannon close to the village of Moygashel. The children come from the village and the surrounding rural areas. The enrolment of the school has increased steadily over the past three years and currently stands at 239 children. Approximately 10% of the children are entitled to free school meals. The school has identified 18% 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 and the teaching and 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.

One hundred and seventeen questionnaires were issued to the parents; approximately 57% were returned to the Inspection Services Branch and 26 contained additional written comments. A majority of the comments reflected very favourably on the professionalism of the staff, the broad range of learning experiences provided for the children and the caring, friendly ethos that permeates the school. A few of the comments made reference to difficulties arising from unforeseen staffing difficulties within the current school year. During this period the school did its best to ensure the children's education did not suffer. The matter was resolved in January 2011 with the appointment of a new vice-principal. The inspection team also met with two parents who requested a meeting.

Eight of the teaching staff and one member of the support staff responded to the online questionnaires. Six teachers supplied additional, very positive comments that included expressions of pride in the school and reference to good team-work among the staff.

The governors spoke very positively about the school and expressed their appreciation of the work of the Principal and all of the staff and their commitment to, and care for the children. They reported that they were kept very well informed about all aspects of school life by the Principal.

In discussions held with the year 6 children they talked with enthusiasm about their experiences in the school. They value the help and support of their teachers, and enjoy the wide range of after-school activities. The children indicated that they know what to do and who to turn to if they have any concerns regarding their work or their safety and well-being.

An analysis of the questionnaires and the written comments was shared with the Principal and the governors.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is outstanding. The Principal and the staff are very committed to the well-being of the children and place very significant emphasis on developing their self-esteem, confidence and personal capabilities. The friendly, inclusive and supportive ethos permeates the whole school and encourages mutual respect and positive behaviour among the children, an example of which is the effective 'Playground Friends System'. The children's views and opinions on a wide range of issues are sought and valued by the teachers and the recently formed 'School Council' is developing this further. The children have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities which include art, music, ICT and sport. In addition, their academic and social development is enhanced through visits to places of educational interest, for example the Balmoral Show, and a range of visitors to the school who share their life experiences with the children. The school also provides a popular 'After School Care Club' to extend the children's experiences and to facilitate the parents.

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 promotes healthy breaks and provides regular opportunities for the children to engage in energetic outdoor play and sports, which encourage them to adopt healthy lifestyles.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) provides valuable support to the school as well as raising funds to enhance the provision and quality of experiences for the children. The parents are kept well informed about the work of the school through, for example, regular newsletters, the school Web site, Open Days and curriculum information meetings. Excellent links have been established with the neighbouring pre-school centre to ensure a smooth transition at the Foundation stage. Valuable links have also been established with the local post-primary schools, Dungannon Council, local sporting organisations and the Moygashel Community Development Association who made a significant financial contribution towards the purchase of new resources for literacy in the school. The school contributes to nominated charities and a strong emphasis is placed on the importance of caring for others in the wider community.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

The children are well motivated in class and have a positive attitude to their learning. They work together collaboratively in pairs and small groups, expressing their own ideas confidently and showing respect for the opinions of others. A strong emphasis is placed on promoting environmental awareness through the curriculum. The children's learning experiences are enriched through involvement in the school Eco Committee, recycling and conservation projects such as the 'Make Space for Nature Project', a gardening club and membership of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data over the past four years shows an improving trend. In the last two years, the performance in both English and mathematics has improved to levels in line with the Northern Ireland average. In the two previous years the school's performance in English and mathematics was below average for NI and when compared with schools in the same free school meals category was also below the average.

The children with special educational needs (SEN) achieve very well. The early identification of need, the very good early intervention strategies and the close monitoring of progress enables the children to become more independent and confident learners as they progress through the school.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

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

Throughout the school the children acquire progressively good oral communication skills. They are encouraged to share ideas with one another and, increasingly, to take some responsibility for aspects of their own learning, to debate with and to question one another, and to make decisions about how a piece of work is to be developed. Most are able to express themselves with competence and with confidence, to make a personal response to a given task and to give valid reasons for their opinion. They communicate with larger audiences through their involvement in key stage assemblies and drama productions for the school and wider community.

The children learn to read through a variety of effective approaches which include modelled, shared, guided, paired and independent activities. The reading programme is complemented with a systematic phonics programme which is having a positive effect on the children's reading, writing and spelling skills. A system of book-banding has been established recently which is used well to encourage breadth and progression in the children's reading experiences. Reading areas within classrooms and the class library are used well to foster the children's interest and enjoyment in reading. Additionally, events such as local library visits, visits from authors and book fairs all help to encourage the children in their reading. The progress made by the children in their reading is monitored closely by the teachers and the co-ordinator. Those children presenting with problems in their reading development are identified early and supported through initiatives such as Reading Partnership. This intervention strategy is working well and has raised the attainment of the children involved. The children's reading standards overall are good and by the end of year 7 the majority are able to read at the level expected for their age. With continued development and focus, this proportion could be increased further.

In the foundation stage (FS), the children are able to think, pair and share as a prelude to their writing. They are then supported well in their early writing through the discussion and agreement of planning maps. As they progress through KS1 they are able to write for an increasing range of purposes and audiences drawing on approaches which model, guide and scaffold to help them. Throughout KS2, they write with increasing competence and a feature of the work with the older children is the good quality of the writing they complete based around the novels they read. The teaching of grammar is often through decontextualised exercises which do not necessarily transfer to the children's independent writing. It is appropriate that the school has identified the review and development of the teaching of grammar as a target in its action plan. Most of the children attain good standards in their writing and for a minority the standards are very good.

Information and communication technology is integrated well in literacy activities; the children make good use of ICT in researching, drafting and presenting their work to a good standard. The school had been involved in the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment accreditation scheme in the past and is planning to do so again in the near future.

The literacy co-ordinator has been in post for just one term. In that short time he has worked successfully to acquire a sound grasp of the school's current provision for literacy and, through discussion with the staff and class observations, has identified appropriate areas for review, development and improvement.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

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

The programme for mathematics across the school provides the children with a wide range of experiences in number, shape and space, measures, data-handling and processes; this includes the effective use of practical equipment by the children in paired and small group activities. In all of the classes the children engage in and enjoy problem-solving and investigative mathematics and are able to apply their knowledge and understanding confidently across the curriculum and often in real life contexts.

The mathematics co-ordinator has worked extremely hard since her appointment; she provides good leadership and has a clear understanding of the areas requiring further development. She has begun to monitor and evaluate the quality of the mathematics provision and has observed the teaching of the subject across all year groups. The teachers have worked together to agree appropriate priorities for further improvement including the use of qualitative and quantitative data to identify and address under-achievement across the ability range and the continued raising of standards; comprehensive action plans have been written to effect improvement and there is evidence of progress being made in both areas.

Mental mathematics is very well integrated across the school and the children are encouraged to use a range of strategies when posed with a numerical problem. In most of the lessons observed, the pace was good, and the activities engaged, motivated and challenged the children; the teachers provided very good opportunities for the children to develop their mathematical language and to articulate their mathematical thinking. The teachers are focused on the development of the children's reasoning and thinking skills and in these the children make very good progress. The teachers are relying less on text books and worksheets and increasingly on purposeful, progressive activities.

The overall standards achieved by the children in mathematics are good; the outcomes at the end of KS2 have improved progressively over the last three years. The children are able to think mathematically across all of the attainment targets and to talk with confidence about their experiences. There is a number of children across the school whose ability in mathematics is very high and it is timely that the teachers are looking at how to best to meet their needs and ensure that they remain highly motivated.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The quality of the planning across the school to support the learning and teaching is very good. The teachers' weekly planning is a particular strength; it focuses on the children's acquisition of knowledge and understanding; the development of their thinking and problem solving skills and the intended learning outcomes. The teachers reflect regularly on and evaluate the children's progress and use this information to inform future learning. One outcome of this reflective practice is the greater emphasis being placed on differentiated learning activities particularly to challenge the more able children and to help raise further the good standards in literacy and mathematics.

3.2 TEACHING

The teachers are dedicated and hard-working; they work very successfully to develop in the children a sense of enjoyment in learning.

The quality of the teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding; a majority of the teaching was very good or outstanding. In the most effective practice, the teachers were explicit about the intended learning, had high expectations of the children's behaviour and attainment and provided a variety of learning activities to sustain the children's engagement and motivation. The teachers used effective questioning to challenge the children's thinking, deepen their understanding and develop their communication skills. Throughout the school the children benefit from, and enjoy, the wide range of practical and active learning experiences.

The special educational needs co-ordinator has been in post since January 2011; he is fully committed to providing high quality provision for the children identified as requiring additional support. He has a good strategic overview of this area and has worked hard to produce a comprehensive draft policy for SEN and, in consultation with the class teachers, to review the targets set for the children with individual education plans.

The classroom assistants contribute significantly to the life and work of the school and all have availed of professional development to enable them to deliver additional literacy and numeracy support for the children through the Reading Partnership and Catch Up programmes.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

The school has designed an effective policy and programme for the monitoring of the standards the children attain in literacy and numeracy. This includes the careful tracking of the children's attainment at the end of KS1 and using this performance data to inform targets and teaching programmes throughout KS2. In addition, through using a well-designed suite of standardised tests, those children who are either low or under-achieving are identified and provided with additional support. The school's rationale for the use it makes of performance data is appropriately clear and unambiguous; to inform and improve the quality of learning and teaching.

The teachers mark the children's work conscientiously. They employ assessment for learning strategies consistently, and through this, indicate to the children how their work can be improved.

The school has very effective processes for keeping the parents informed about their children's progress. Through the year there are two parent teacher meetings and one written report. In addition, teachers respond readily to any request from a parent in relation to the care and/or education of their child. The written reports have been reviewed recently and reflect fully the Northern Ireland Curriculum (NIC). They provide the parents with a very comprehensive assessment of their child's progress and attainment and, most helpfully, suggest aspects which could be further developed and improved.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The overall quality of leadership and management is very good.

The Principal is in her fourth year in the post and provides very effective leadership and management for the school. She has high aspirations for the future development of the school and a clear understanding of how to realise this. She is thoroughly committed and dedicated to providing high standards of education for all the children in her care. She promotes a team approach among the staff which ensures that all can contribute to the good standards of work achieved by the children. In addition, she has worked successfully to reduce a large deficit in the school budget.

The Vice-principal was appointed in January 2011 and in this short time has made a very positive contribution to a number of key areas across the school. He is fully supportive of the Principal and together they have established a very good working relationship.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The process of self-evaluation leading to improvement is well embedded in the school. Since her appointment, the Principal has sought and acted on the views and opinions of the staff, the parents and the children on a wide range of issues.

The school development plan is compliant with the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.

4.3 ACCOMMODATION

The internal and external environments of the school are very well presented and maintained. Storage space for learning and teaching resources is inadequate.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the outstanding quality of the pastoral care provided for the children almost all of whom display exemplary behaviour both in and out of the classroom;
- the quality of the teaching observed, the majority of which was very good or outstanding;

- the good and improving standards achieved by the children in literacy and mathematics;
- the very good quality of the arrangements for the children who require additional support in school;
- the very good leadership and management of the Principal; and
- the hard-working and dedicated teachers and support staff.

5.2 The area for improvement is the need to:

- develop further the work that has begun in addressing the needs of the children with very high levels of ability.

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.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- At set-down and pick-up times, there is considerable traffic congestion at the entrance to the school leading to traffic back-up extending dangerously to the traffic lights and the main road.

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