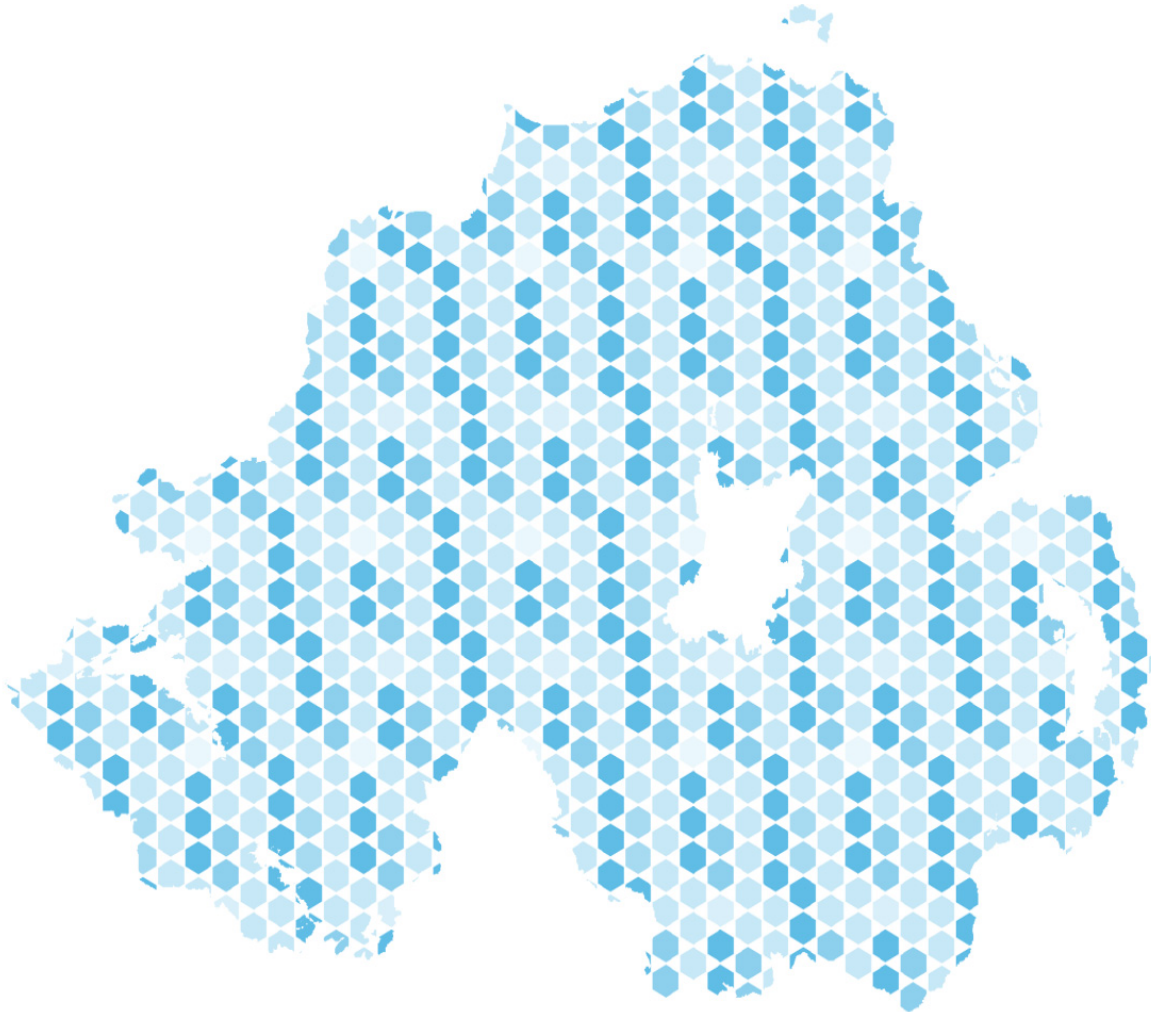


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

King's Park Primary School,
Newtownabbey

Report of an Inspection
in January 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, the Inspectorate relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

King's Park Primary School is situated in King's Drive, Newtownabbey. The majority of the children come from within a ten mile radius of the school. The enrolment of the school has remained steady over the past three years and currently stands at 349 children. Approximately 24% of the children are entitled to free school meals. The school has identified 12 % 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 communications 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 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 years 6 and 7.

One hundred and eight questionnaires were issued to parents within the primary school: approximately 29% were returned to Inspection Services Branch of which ten contained additional written comments. All of the responses indicated a high level of satisfaction with the school. In particular, the parents highlighted the care and attention shown for the well-being of all the children by the dedicated and supportive staff.

Fourteen teachers and one member of the support staff completed the on-line questionnaire; there were 12 written comments. The responses were wholly positive regarding their commitment to implementing a range of school initiatives and in the support the Principal and senior management team provide to their pastoral well-being and professional development.

The governors spoke very positively about the caring, inclusive ethos of the school and their appreciation of the work of all of the staff and their commitment to the children. They reported that they were kept well informed and had benefited from the opportunities for staff to develop the governors' understanding of school developments such as the phonics programme, the use of the interactive whiteboard and child protection related matters.

In discussions held with the year 6 and 7 children they talked openly, positively and with great 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 and Friday clubs. 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 very good.

The school has a welcoming and inclusive ethos and during the inspection the children were polite and well-mannered and their behaviour was exemplary. The relationships between the adults and the children, and between the children when working together, are very good. There is often a sense of fun and enjoyment reflected in the activities, which encourages the children to apply themselves to the tasks.

There is an effective whole-school approach to promoting and rewarding positive behaviour including the 'Friday Child' badges and the year 7 'Playground Buddy' scheme which develops the children's attitudes of sharing and responsibility. The school offers a 'Breakfast Club' and a few after-school activities for the children and evening workshops for the parents through the Extended-Schools programme. Good progress is being made to involve the children more fully in the decision-making process about issues which affect them in school through the Eco Team and the recent establishment of a School Council.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education, but the following areas need to be addressed:

- an intimate care policy, to guide the staff in their work with the children, needs to be agreed and the policy shared with the parents; and
- the development of procedures for the safe storage of prescription medicines and written parental permission for administering such items.

1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. There is a well-enjoyed breakfast club, the year 7 mini enterprise, 'Healthy Hut' and the effective monitoring and evaluation of the successful healthy breaks scheme. Across the school the children have regular opportunities for energetic outdoor play and sports, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

There are very good links with the school and the local community. The parents receive regular newsletters and information about events in the school and the school website contains a message board and photographic records of recent activities for each class. Parents are invited to attend one formal parent-teacher consultation per year and in addition they receive two written reports on their child's progress. The school values the work of the Parents' Support Group in raising funds to further enhance the environment, the provision and the experiences for the children.

The school has developed very effective links with other local schools through sporting and drama events and competitions and the year 7 children have the opportunity to visit a range of post-primary schools to take part in organised curricular and sporting events. The after-school science club is delivered by staff from a local post-primary school.

Good links with local businesses and the community extend the children's understanding of the wider world. The school makes good use of the expertise of statutory organisations and external agencies to enhance the provision for the children.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

The children settle quickly to work and are well-engaged in their learning; they enjoy their activities and experiences, listen well, respect the staff and, when given the opportunity, they work well collaboratively and in small groups.

At foundation stage (FS), the children experience a stimulating play-based curriculum and most are able to sustain extended periods of concentrated play. They access the range of support materials and equipment provided by the teachers independently.

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 is below the Northern Ireland average. When compared with schools in a similar free schools meals category, the levels of attainment in English and mathematics are also below the average.

The children with special educational needs (SEN) make satisfactory progress overall and a minority of the children make good progress. The targets set in Individual Education Plans (IEPs) need to be more sharply focused on longer-term outcomes which could be measured and used to indicate the effectiveness of the teaching support and the progress the children make.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

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

The recently appointed literacy co-ordinators for KS1 and KS2 have effectively evaluated the reading scheme and, as a result, have developed a scheme matched appropriately to the age and abilities of the children. They have identified the need to revise and update the literacy policy.

Talking and listening is promoted effectively in most classes, through open questioning, paired and small group work. When given the opportunity, the children can communicate their ideas and feelings using an expanding vocabulary.

In the FS, the children become familiar with different forms of print and experiment with informal mark making. The children's letter formation, word building skills and knowledge of the basic conventions such as simple sentence structure are developed through shared writing activities. As their skills develop, the children's independent writing is promoted appropriately; by the end of KS1, the majority of children can express their ideas with a length and quality of content appropriate to their ability.

As they progress through KS2, the children extend their range of writing styles and in the samples of work available during the inspection there were opportunities to write for a variety of purposes and audiences; in a minority of the samples the standard of writing was good. There is a need to develop consistently the writing process across the school. The teachers need to plan for and provide a wider range of more open-ended contexts for writing, with less reliance on work-sheets, in order to foster the children's creativity and to provide greater challenge and raise standards. ICT was used effectively to support learning; in KS2, the children were using the internet for research purposes alongside dictionaries, atlases and thesauri.

The children are taught to read systematically through the use of commercial reading schemes which are enhanced by a wide range of appropriate support materials such as novels, 'big books' and reference materials. They are developing an enjoyment of reading along with a good range of strategies to help them interpret unfamiliar text. The younger children are involved in a good range of reading activities including those presented during play, through whole-class story-telling sessions and through shared reading with the teacher. The children's reading skills are developed progressively as they move through the school; they make steady progress in their reading in line with their abilities, and by the end of year 7 many read with confidence and fluency. The older children are able to locate and select appropriate information from reference books and from the Internet. The KS1 and KS2 Literacy Co-ordinators have led a whole-school focus on reading and have availed of effective support from the curriculum advisory and support service (CASS) of the North-Eastern Education and Library Service (NEELB) through the Raising Achievement Programme. Teachers and classroom assistants have also undergone training in Reading Partnerships and the school has taken part in the 'Time to Read' programme. The co-ordinators have monitored reading standards closely and the test results indicate an improving trend in the children's attainments.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The quality of the provision in mathematics and numeracy is satisfactory.

The numeracy team demonstrates a commitment to action planning to improve aspects of the provision. There is a need for the senior management team to clarify roles and responsibilities for the whole-school co-ordination for numeracy and develop a culture of self-evaluation in order to promote improvement in the quality of the provision for mathematics.

In the FS, the learning is matched appropriately to the age and ability of the children, and a high priority is given to the use of practical and play-based learning activities to support learning in numeracy. The children have an understanding of early mathematical concepts and they have opportunities to apply their knowledge to meaningful contexts across the curriculum. Early mathematical language is modelled well by the teachers and used well by the children.

At KS1, the children use practical resources effectively to establish mathematical concepts and are able to demonstrate an appropriate understanding of number, measures, and shape and space. In discussions with the year 4 children, the more able demonstrated a good understanding of basic number, measures and shape and space. Importantly, the teachers need to extend the range of opportunities for the children to reinforce and develop their numeracy skills through activity-based learning.

The children engage well in an appropriate range of learning activities at KS2. In discussions with the year 7 children, the most able have a good understanding of place value, number facts, measures, and shape and space. Overall, the children are flexible in their mathematical thinking and are able to use an appropriate range of strategies.

Across all the key stages, the children enjoy their mathematics, use mathematical language accurately and standards of numeracy presentation are good. ICT is used effectively to support the children's learning using, for example, the Beebot, interactive whiteboards, and numeracy software and websites. In the best practice, in the majority of lessons observed, the teachers match the learning closely to the ability of the children, mental mathematics strategies are promoted effectively and linked appropriately to the main lesson activity, and the children receive helpful feedback on how to improve their learning in mathematics. These aspects of effective practice need to be developed more consistently throughout the school. Overall, at KS1 and KS2, the teachers need to increase the level of challenge, particularly for the more able children, in order to raise standards. Furthermore, there is a need to provide the children with greater opportunities to extend their mathematical thinking through investigative work.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

There is appropriate long-term planning for mathematics and literacy. Communication between teachers across the key stages is beginning to ensure breadth, continuity and progression in the children's learning.

The staff has recently reviewed the medium-term planning and in the best practice, in a minority of classes, the teacher's evaluation of the learning informs future planning to effectively meet the individual needs of all of the children. This good practice now needs to be disseminated more consistently across the school.

3.2 TEACHING

During the inspection, the quality of teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. A majority of the lessons, observed was good or very good and a significant minority satisfactory with important areas for improvement.

In the most effective practice, the teachers used a wide range of teaching approaches, including engaging activities which incorporated challenging tasks and promoted thinking skills. The pace was brisk; there was effective questioning, the learning intentions were clearly explained, attained and consolidated at the end of lessons. There was differentiation in the effective lessons which met the needs of all of the children and there was adept use of ICT to support learning. This good practice needs to be developed more consistently across the school.

In FS, in particular, there is good promotion of the children's self-esteem and confidence, through established routines which promote independence and self-management skills. In a significant minority of the lessons observed, the lessons lacked pace and the activities had insufficient focus and challenge, particularly for the more able children. During these lessons, the children were unclear about the purpose of the task and they were overly teacher-directed.

The SEN teacher provides withdrawal sessions to support the younger children who require help in literacy. This support is generally of a good quality and the sessions are conducted in a supportive and inclusive learning environment. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) needs to review the planning for a small number of children for whom the current programme is not meeting their needs effectively.

The school has recently introduced further in-class and small group support for children with additional learning needs in literacy and numeracy through deploying two highly effective classroom assistants. It will be important for the SENCO to monitor and evaluate the progress made by the children receiving this support and to ensure the programme is closely linked to the children's work in class, through co-operative planning and regular liaison with the class teachers and classroom assistants. The school works effectively with a number of outside agencies to further enhance the provision for those children who have been identified by the school as being in need of additional learning support.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

In most classes, the teachers mark the children's written work regularly and supportively and provide prompt oral feedback to improve learning. In the most effective practice, in a minority of classes, effective marking promotes improvement and the children are encouraged to engage in the self-evaluation of their learning. This good practice needs to be applied consistently across the whole school.

The school uses a range of standardised and non standardised tests; they have begun to use assessment data in order to track individual children and identify underachievement. In addition, Classroom 2000 (C2k) is now being used to track the children's progress in their standardised scores, and the results from this tracking are increasingly used to identify and target underachievement for the more able as well as the children who need extra support. The school now needs to track individual progress, identify specific learning programmes and set individual and class targets in order to raise standards.

The school needs to inform the parents of the children who have SEN about the learning targets in the IEPs and the progress their children make.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory.

The Principal has been in post for 15 years and manages the school and the resources effectively. He has set a highly positive tone for the work of the school through his effective working relationships with the children, staff, governors and the parents and with a range of outside agencies to support the children's learning. He fosters an inclusive whole-school ethos based on mutual respect and has a very good knowledge and understanding of the school context and knows the children and their families well. He is supported enthusiastically by the teaching staff and his Vice-principal and has promoted a collegiate approach to school improvement. He encourages and supports the continued professional development of his staff.

Over recent years the school has experienced a large number of changes in staffing. Due to these changes, curricular teams have been set up in order to fully embed the Primary Curriculum and provide an opportunity for a new staff team to bond together. This arrangement has encouraged and embraced the motivation and enthusiasm of the staff. It

will be important now to focus more sharply on the clarity of roles and responsibilities for those involved with the leadership and co-ordination of key aspects of the curriculum at whole-school level, and to monitor and evaluate provision in a more strategic way in order to raise standards. While the standards achieved by the majority of the children range from satisfactory to very good, the standards in aspects of literacy and numeracy achieved by a minority of the children, across the ability range, could be higher than they are presently. It is essential that the dissemination of best practice is an integral part of the raising of standards.

The SENCO has recently received support from the CASS of the NEELB and as a result has made a number of changes to the arrangements for SEN provision. It will be important for the SENCO to monitor closely these changes in order to assess the progress being made by these children and the effectiveness of the revised SEN support arrangements within the school.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The school development plan (SDP) is compliant with the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005. The SDP sets out a large number of priorities for the medium and longer term. A noteworthy feature of the SDP is the clear information provided on the effective management of the school budget by the Principal.

The school should adjust the development plan to take into account the inspection findings in particular, increasing the KS2 targets for literacy and numeracy in the SDP, specifically for the most able children who are capable of reaching higher levels of attainment in KS2.

The school's use of self-evaluation leading to improvement is at an early stage of development. The school now needs to place a stronger emphasis on evaluating other forms of first-hand evidence, including the more regular evaluation of samples of the children's written work to complement the analysis of data presently ongoing and to make any adjustments to the classroom practice if necessary.

4.3 ACCOMMODATION

The school accommodation consists of a main building which contains 16 classrooms, two of which are used for SEN and a computer suite, an assembly hall, a small library, a canteen, and a staff room. The standard of caretaking is very good and the staff work hard to create bright and inviting classrooms and corridors celebrating the children's work. The school is very well maintained. The school continues to improve the storage arrangements within the school.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the well-mannered, respectful children who are engaged enthusiastically in their learning;
- the improving standards in the quality of the children's reading;
- the very good quality of the pastoral care provided for the children and the staff and the significant contribution made by the support staff to the children's learning and development;

- the quality of the teaching observed during the inspection, a majority of which was good or better;
- the very good links with the local community; and
- the hard-working Principal who is highly committed to the pastoral well-being of the children and the work of the school.

5.2 The areas for improvement include the need to:

- match the learning more closely to the varying needs of all of the children, and provide higher levels of challenge, in order to raise attainment;
- improve the strategic leadership at all levels and, in particular, redefine and clarify the roles and responsibilities associated with the whole-school co-ordination of the curriculum; and
- implement a more rigorous process of self-evaluation with a sharper focus on raising standards.

5.3 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. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-24 month period.

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