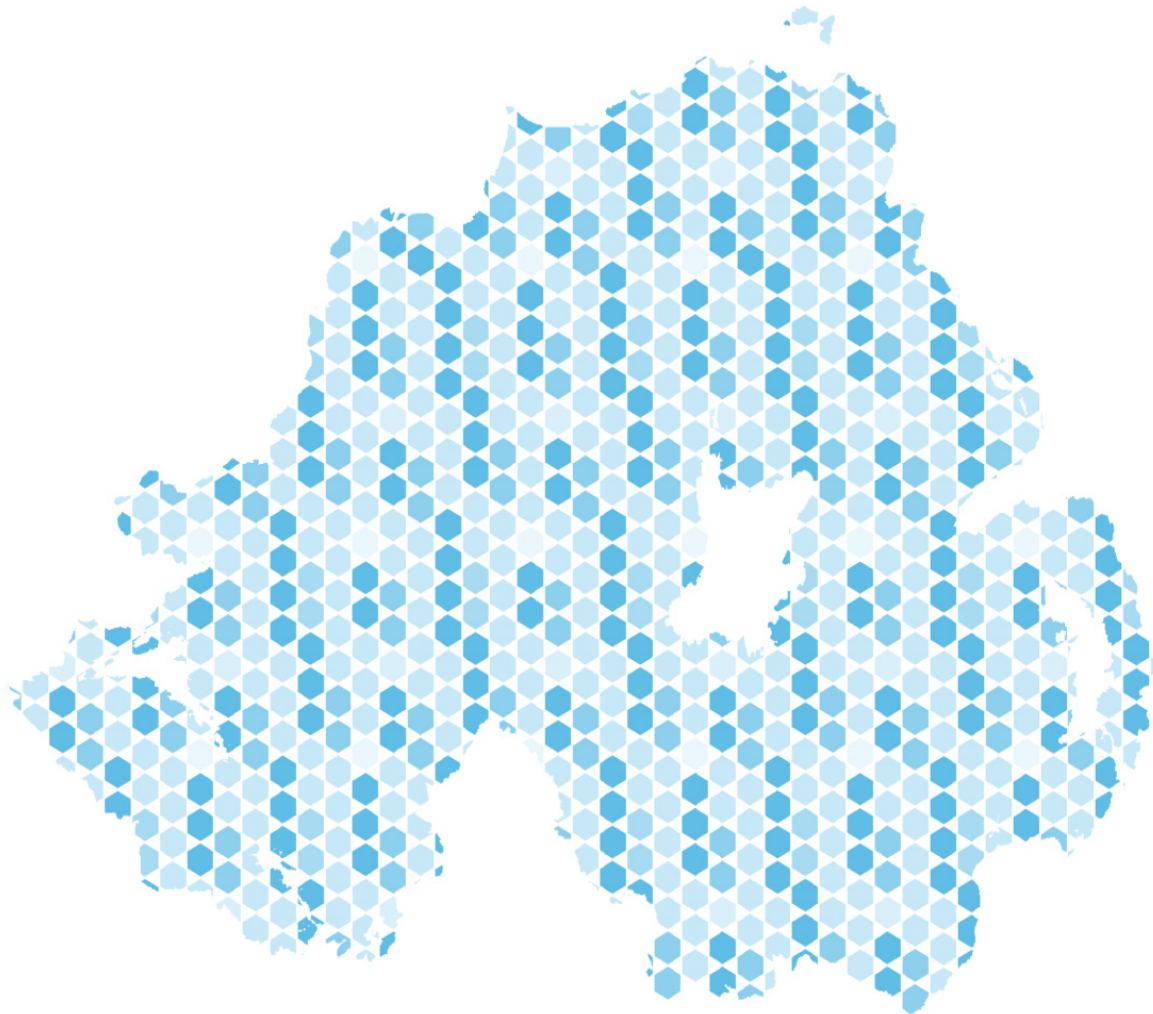


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Knockmore Primary School,
Lisburn

Report of an Inspection
in October 2010

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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

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Knockmore Primary School is located on Hertford Crescent, Moira Road, Lisburn. The enrolment in the primary school has fluctuated slightly over the past four years and stands currently at 159 children, including 18 children in the Social Communication Unit (SCU) and 48 children in the Speech and Language Unit (SLU). The majority of the children attending the mainstream primary school come from the local vicinity. The children attending the SCU and SLU travel from a wide geographical area. At the time of the inspection, approximately 29% of the children were entitled to receive free school meals and approximately 27% of the children were identified by the school as having special educational needs.

The school provides specialist teaching support in the SCU for 18 children in three class units (years 1 to 3), who are identified as being on the autistic spectrum and who would benefit from an autism specific teaching environment. The aim of the units is to develop the children's skills to enable them to cope in mainstream school. The units receive support from the speech and language service.

The school makes provision in the SLU, in four class units (years 1 to 3) for 48 children with language and communication difficulties. The children are statemented for specialist teaching support for one to three years in the units. The aim of the provision is to provide comprehensive support to improve the children's language skills and enable each to access the curriculum. The children may transfer to the mainstream school or to a local primary school or mainstream key stage (KS) 2 language unit following final assessment of progress. Ongoing support is provided also for the children by the speech and language therapists and the therapy assistant based full-time in the school.

The school provides outreach support to local primary schools, primarily for KS1 children with language and communication difficulties. In discussion with the outreach teachers and through the scrutiny of the materials, they indicated their very good knowledge of and skills in drawing up individual language programmes for each child referred.

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on:

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

The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning, and the school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection, were evaluated. In addition, the school was selected as part of a sample to monitor the implementation of the healthy food in schools initiative.

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 confidential questionnaires prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors), and a group of children from year 6 and year 7. Seventy- one questionnaires were issued to the parents of the mainstream primary school; approximately 32% were returned to the Inspection Services Branch and eight contained additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaires support strongly the work of the school, in particular, the dedicated and caring staff and the wide range of extra-curricular activities available for the children. Sixty -six questionnaires were issued to the parents of the SCU and the SLU. Approximately 42% of the parents responded to the SCU and SLU questionnaires and fifteen made additional written comments. The responses from the parental questionnaires were all positive and indicated that the parents have a very high regard for the special education units.

Eight of the teaching staff and four members of the support staff responded to the online questionnaires. Almost all of the responses commented positively on the very good working relationships across the school and the dedicated team work to develop the school in the best interests of all the children. A few of the written comments from the staff indicated that they would like to avail of further opportunities for professional development and to obtain additional learning resources for the children.

The governors expressed their appreciation of the dedicated acting Principal and hard-working staff in the school, commenting particularly on the high quality of the educational provision, the supportive parent/teacher relationships, the welcoming and caring ethos and the high esteem in which the school is held within the local community.

The children in year 6 and 7 spoke very highly of the support provided by their teachers, the good range of extra-curricular activities available and the friendly and supportive atmosphere throughout the school. They are fully aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety and well-being.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) has reported to the acting Principal and representatives of the governors the main messages emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school, including the SCU and SLU, is very good. A strong sense of community integrates the whole school; the caring environment in all the classes helps the children develop their self-confidence and they demonstrate exemplary standards of behaviour. All members of staff promote positive behaviour within an ethos of mutual understanding and respect. This is evident in the classrooms through the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) programme and the good range of play activities available to the children in the playgrounds. The children access a Pastoral Care Guide for Children, which contains helpful advice and support for them expressed in a child- friendly format.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

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

1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. All the school initiatives combine well to encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles, such as, the encouragement stickers given to the children for their participation in healthy breaks and the meaningful involvement with health promoting organisations.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The acting Principal and teachers are committed to developing effective links with parents to ensure they work together for the benefit of the children. There are regular opportunities for the parents to consult with the teachers, both formally and informally, and information is shared through newsletters, and the parent notice boards. The Parent and Staff Association provide a variety of social activities which raise funds for the acquisition of additional learning resources for the children. The school has developed a good range of links with the local community including other schools in the area, Lisburn City Council, Knockmore Community Association and several businesses who have contributed to the development of the school garden project. The Extended Schools programme provides the children with opportunities, for example, to participate in mini soccer for KS1 children and Olympic handball for KS2 children. In addition, the school hosts a summer scheme which is open to all children who attend the school and the local community.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 LEARNING

The children display high levels of interest in their work; in particular, their involvement with the planning of the topic work. They are very responsive and work well on independent and co-operative tasks. In the best practice, the children are developing effective peer-evaluation skills to improve their work in a positive and collaborative manner. This very good practice needs to be disseminated throughout the school as part of the whole school approach to developing supportive feedback to the children about their learning. In the foundation stage (FS), the quality of the play-based learning is good; the children display high levels of independence and evident enjoyment of their learning.

The children in the SCU and SLU make good progress given their communication and language difficulties. The children in the SCU respond well to the visually structured classroom environment and the practical approach to the lessons. They enjoy the activities, develop their social skills at appropriate rates and demonstrate improved interaction with the staff and each other.

An analysis of the KS2 assessment data over the past four years shows that in English and mathematics, the school's performance is improving steadily and is at a satisfactory level when compared with schools in a similar free schools meals category. The school's internal information indicates that, when comparing the children's standardised scores in English and mathematics with the Non-reading Intelligence Test (NRIT), the majority of the children are performing at a level commensurate with their abilities.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

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

The school has a coherent approach to improving the children's reading skills. In FS, KS1 and KS2, the children are acquiring core reading skills through the development of linguistic phonics and experiencing modelled and shared reading; they are beginning to use these skills to assist them in reading unfamiliar text. As the children move into KS2, these are good opportunities for developing greater independence in their reading skills. The school's reading scheme is supplemented by the investment in a wide range of fiction and non-fiction books which are banded to support the children's independent reading. The children benefit from participation in a Reading Partnership scheme delivered very effectively by two classroom assistants, one of whom has received training in library skills. Well-stocked, age appropriate class libraries contribute also to the promotion of reading. By the end of KS1 and KS2, most of the children read with a good level of fluency, understanding and enjoyment.

From year 1, the children are encouraged and supported well by the teachers to listen closely to others and to give oral responses during lessons. Effective use is made of Big Books as a tool to teach reading and as a stimulus for writing, talking and listening. By the end of KS1, they contribute confidently to class discussions. The majority of teaching in KS1 and KS2 provides a good range of opportunities for children to develop their talking and listening skills, such as paired and small group work, circle time and formal presentations.

In the FS, the children become familiar with different forms of print and experiment appropriately with early writing skills. 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 they progress through KS2, the children extend appropriately their range of writing styles. In the samples of work available during the inspection, there were good opportunities for the children to write across the areas of learning and for a variety of purposes and audiences; in the best practice, the standard of writing was very good. The teachers and the children use effectively ICT to support learning; in particular, the Interactive whiteboards are used by the teachers and children to assist their work in linguistic phonics and there was evidence of the digital camera being used well to illustrate procedural writing.

The children in the SCU and SLU can read and recall the main features of short stories. Their capacity to write is developing well; a minority of the children can recount in writing to a good standard the main aspects of stories they have read and understood.

The literacy co-ordinator has overseen the formation of a literacy team who have identified appropriately the need to review and update the literacy policy and schemes. The current priorities, such as the promotion of linguistic phonics and comprehension skills, are appropriate.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The quality of provision for mathematics and numeracy is good.

In the FS, the children are developing mathematical language and an understanding of mathematical concepts such as number and sorting through a range of practical activities including play-based learning. Good use is made of themes, real-life contexts and natural and authentic items to promote mathematical thinking and to make the learning more meaningful for the children. They demonstrate a mathematical knowledge and understanding appropriate to their age and ability.

At KS1 and KS2, the children use mathematical language with increasing fluency and demonstrate a good understanding of processes, number, measures, shape and space and handling data. Mental mathematics activities are an integral and enjoyable part of most lessons; however, during the inspection, a small number of the more able children appeared less flexible in their mental calculations. In the best practice, a variety of games and practical equipment support and consolidate the children's learning in number. The children apply well their mathematical knowledge and skills in other areas of learning, for example, in the World Around Us. In addition, appropriate ICT programs are used to develop the children's thinking skills through problem solving activities. The year 7 children have participated successfully in the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) ICT Accreditation scheme.

By year 3, most of the children in the SCU and SLU have developed a good understanding of number recognition, simple addition and subtraction and two-dimensional shapes. In all their activities, a minority of the children will continue to require specialist support.

The joint co-ordinators work diligently to improve the provision for mathematics across the school. Recent developments include the investment in a new mathematics scheme, a review of the mathematics policy which is currently in draft form, a revised planning format and an appropriate whole school focus on number and mental mathematics. The co-ordinators are leading the staff effectively in addressing the main areas identified through the detailed analysis of the school's data. The information guides the learning and teaching in mathematics by setting both individual and group targets to bring about improvement in the children's attainment.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The school has introduced a new half-termly planning format which guides effectively the teaching. The planning includes adept evaluations based on the children's learning to inform future learning.

In the SCU and SLU, the planning is thorough and based on the detailed assessment information of each child as provided by their previous schools and in their statements. The teachers work hard, plan well for individual children and ensure that activities are short, well paced and practical to engage fully the children with their learning.

3.2 TEACHING

The quality of teaching in almost all the lessons observed in the mainstream classes and in the SCU and SLU was good or very good; in a small number of the lessons, it was outstanding. In the best practice, the teachers had high expectations of what the children could achieve and motivated the children to engage with their learning. The work was well paced, practical and was matched closely to the individual needs and abilities of the children within the class. The teachers used effective questioning to promote the children's thinking skills and oral responses. The sharing of the learning intentions and the success criteria facilitated the valuable review of the children's learning during the course of the lessons. In the SCU and the SLU, the teachers' joint sessions with the speech and language therapists are a very good feature of the best teaching and provide excellent opportunities for the children to learn together and to develop a sense of achievement.

On a few occasions, there was a lack of challenging related activities to follow on from the shared and guided reading sessions and the mathematics lessons to reinforce and extend the children's learning. To enhance the teaching across the school, more attention needs to be given to differentiating further the tasks set to ensure greater challenge for the more able children.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

There are appropriate procedures and records in place for keeping parents informed about their children's learning. They include an annual formal parent-teacher consultation and a written report at the end of the school year. There is an open-door policy for informal consultations between staff and parents.

The teachers mark the children's work regularly and supportively and give constructive oral feedback. In the best practice, they provide children with helpful comments on how their learning might improve with reference to the shared learning intentions.

Across each key stage, there is regular and effective observation, monitoring and recording of individual children's progress. The teachers make very good use of the performance data in English and mathematics to track the children's progress and to set appropriate individual and class targets. The school has identified the need to monitor further and evaluate the effectiveness of these targets on learning and teaching, and, in particular, to ensure that all the children experience challenge in their learning.

3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The quality of the provision for special educational needs (SEN) is very good.

The children who require additional support with their learning are identified appropriately at an early stage through the teachers' observations, diagnostic tests and the analysis of performance data. The class teachers consult with the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) to create the individual education plans (IEPs). They contain relevant targets that are monitored closely and reviewed regularly by the staff. The parents are kept well informed about the children's learning targets.

The current SEN provision is mainly through support in class which is well informed by the IEPs; the development of the children's learning is enhanced further by the effective deployment of the classroom assistants. The children respond well to this provision and the analysis of their IEP targets indicates that most children make good progress.

There is a very good exchange of professional expertise between the teachers in the SCU and the SLU and the mainstream school which enhances the provision for all the children. The school avails of an outreach programme to support children with specific needs and has developed recently links with the Additional Support for Children in Education Team (ASCET) which has provided useful staff development in sensory awareness.

3.5 SOCIAL AND COMMUNICATION UNIT AND SPEECH AND LANGUAGE UNIT

The quality of provision across the SCU and the SLU is very good.

The children benefit from the specialist support provided by experienced and hard working staff. The data indicates that approximately 50% of the children transfer to mainstream provision and require no additional or specialist support. The remainder still require continued stage 5 support with their learning to access the wider curriculum and learn alongside their peers.

The SCU and SLU provide a much needed resource for children with significant delays in their learning and attainment. They are well managed and organised and have a number of important strengths including the accumulated specialised experience of the staff, access to valuable speech and language support and the caring and motivating learning environment.

Overall, the placement of seven special education units in the school concentrated at years 1 to 3 obliges the transfer of children at the beginning of year 4 to other schools. The latter has the potential to cause unnecessary tension for parents and children alike. This issue, together with the long distances some of the children travel to school, needs to be considered by the South Eastern Education and Library Board as part of the future planning for the school. It is important, also, that the staff continue to access ongoing training in their specialist areas to ensure that the needs of a small minority of children, who have greater challenges, can be met effectively.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The acting Principal has been in post for three years and provides very good leadership. He is fully committed to the life and work of the school and his concern and care for the staff and the children is evident. The acting Principal has developed a strong collegiate approach to the leadership and management and organisation of the school that places the education and development of each child at the centre of its work. His strategic direction for the school is exemplified well through the SDP that sets out appropriate priorities with a clear understanding of how to achieve improvement in the children's attainments in English and mathematics. In addition, the acting vice-principal, the literacy co-ordinator, the numeracy co-ordinator and the SENCO provide very good leadership and have identified appropriate developmental needs regarding their respective areas of responsibility. The school is well placed to address the area for further development that is identified in this report.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The SDP meets the requirements of The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005. It sets out clearly the school's priorities; for example, the review and update of the whole-school guidance for mathematics and ICT. The teachers work within a climate of self-reflection and evaluation of the learning and teaching and an increasingly knowledgeable understanding of how to improve the children's attainments.

4.3 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The governors are involved in the overall strategic planning and policy development for the school. With advice from the acting Principal and the school's management team, the governors have managed well the financial needs of the school and are extending the range of resources within the school. The governors give very good support to the acting Principal and the staff in the implementation of the SDP.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the very good quality of the pastoral care provision which fosters successfully a caring and inclusive ethos;
- the exemplary behaviour of the children;

- the quality of the teaching in the lessons observed, almost all of which ranged from good to very good;
- the detailed analysis of the performance data which contributes to the good standards achieved by the children in English and mathematics;
- the very good provision for the children in the Social Communication Unit and the Speech and Language Unit; and
- the very good strategic leadership of the acting Principal and the commitment of the acting vice-principal, co-ordinators, teachers and support staff to raising further the children's attainments in English and mathematics.

5.2 The area for improvement is the need to:

- ensure there is appropriate challenge in the lessons, particularly, for the more able children.

5.3 In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address.

5.4 The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the school's progress on the area for improvement.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- The school needs to secure appropriately the playground areas to prevent the children's ease of access to the car park.

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