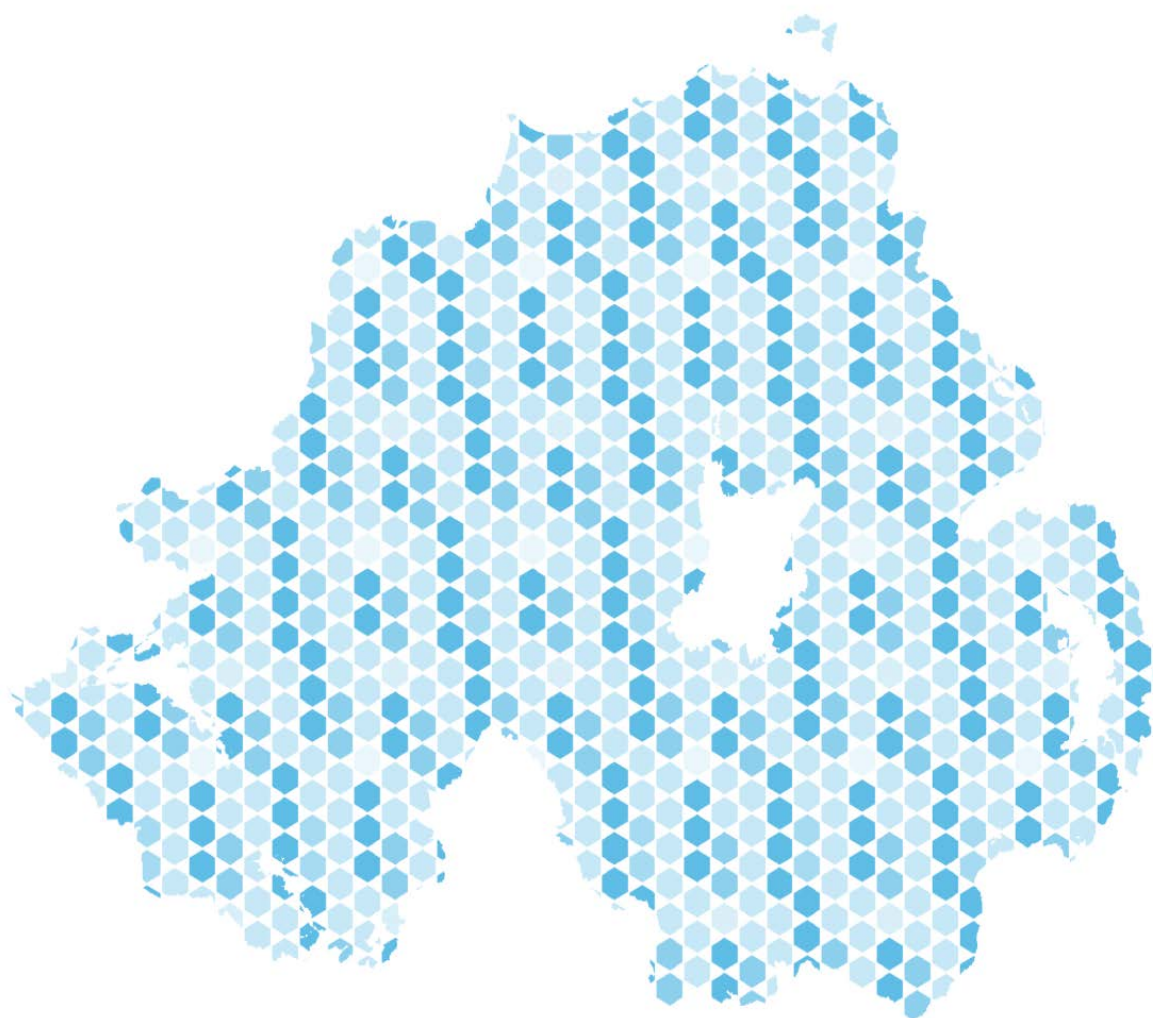


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Rasharkin Primary School,
Ballymena

Report of an Inspection
in October 2012



Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER
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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

Glossary of terms and abbreviations

DE	Department of Education
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate
CCEA	Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessments
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
KS	Key stage
NI	Northern Ireland
SDP	School Development Plan
SEN	Special Educational Needs
FSM	Free School Meals
NU	Nursery Unit
IM	Irish Medium

1. School context

Rasharkin Primary School is situated in Bamford Park, Rasharkin, Ballymena, County Antrim. The enrolment has remained stable over the past five years, being 67 in 2008 and currently 69 children. At the time of the inspection, approximately 20% of the children were entitled to free school meals and 20% were identified as requiring help with aspects of their learning. The school has experienced a number of staffing changes; the appointment of a new Principal just over three years ago, and the appointment of two new teachers in September 2012.

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 in the school; 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.

OVERALL FINDING OF THE INSPECTION

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.

Summary of key findings

Achievements and standards	Very good
Quality of provision	Very good
Leadership and management	Very good

KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

3. Achievements and standards

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

- The children are well-motivated, display positive attitudes to their work and achieve very good standards. Almost all participate well in group and paired work, are willing to ask questions, explain their reasoning, and summarise their findings. Across the three key stages (KS), almost all the learning experiences provide the children with very good opportunities to develop their problem-solving capabilities and greater independence. The children participate meaningfully in topic planning by negotiating the direction of the learning and the research sources.

- An analysis of the end of KS2 assessment data for English and mathematics shows a consistent improvement in standards over the last four years. In both English and mathematics the school's performance is above the Northern Ireland (NI) average, significantly above for mathematics. When compared with schools in the same free school meals category, the levels of attainment in English are significantly above the NI average in two out of the four years, and, in mathematics, are consistently and substantially above the NI average over the four years*.*
- Most of the children achieve very good standards in reading and writing. In the foundation stage (FS) and KS1, the children develop an appropriate range of reading and writing skills. In KS2, the children infer meaning and gain enjoyment from a broad range of increasingly complex texts. They read with expression, accuracy and demonstrate very good comprehension skills.
- The school's internal performance data shows that the children make excellent progress in mathematics and numeracy; by the end of KS2, almost all achieve standards in line with their ability or above expectation. During discussions with the year 4 and year 7 children, they demonstrated a very good knowledge and understanding of important mathematical ideas. They were able to complete mental calculations quickly, to articulate the processes they use, and to talk about their learning. By the end of year 7, the children have a very good understanding of a wide range of aspects of the mathematics curriculum.
- The children identified as having special educational needs (SEN) benefit significantly from the learning support that meets their individual needs. The school's internal performance data indicates that they all make good and very good progress over time.

4. Provision for learning

The quality of the provision for learning is very good.

- The quality of the planning, teaching and assessment for learning is consistently high in most lessons. The teachers' planning for English and mathematics is clear, systematic and guides the learning well. In the best practice, the teachers evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching and use this to inform future planning to meet the learning needs of all the children. Most of the teaching is good or better; in a majority of the lessons observed it was very good and outstanding. In the most effective teaching, the teachers create an investigative environment, develop the children's thinking skills and build on their prior knowledge and understanding. The quality of the extension activities is suitably differentiated to match the range of need, including appropriate challenge for the more able children. The teachers make good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support the children in their learning in both literacy and numeracy. All of the classroom assistants are highly skilled in giving very good support to the children's learning. The school implements effective processes for the continual assessment of all the children's learning through a comprehensive analysis of standardised and non-standardised tests.

* 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.

- The systematic development of the children's reading and writing skills is a strength of the literacy provision. In KS1 and KS2, the development of the children's research skills includes accessing internet sources and at its most effective, this work involves the development of their skills of analysis and interpretation of a range of sources, including historical material and digital media. The teachers set a high level of challenge in numeracy activities; they make good use of routines and incidental opportunities to develop numeracy and to integrate the learning successfully across other areas of the curriculum.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is very good. This is evident through: the caring, supportive and friendly ethos within the school; the excellent behaviour of the children; and by the strong sense of mutual respect that exists among all members of the school community. The class council system provides the children with a genuine, consultative process whereby their views are sought and valued. The children's work and achievements are celebrated throughout the school.
- The overall provision for special educational needs is very good. The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified early. There is effective in-class and withdrawal support for English and mathematics and the work is matched well to the needs and abilities of the children. The staff involves the children successfully with the setting of their personal learning targets.
- The school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, through, for example, extra-curricular activities and the provision of healthy breaks, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

5. Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management is very good.

- The whole-school self-evaluation and school development planning processes are very good. The well-focused action plans are informed by the effective analysis and use of a wide range of the school's performance data. The Principal provides very good strategic and pastoral leadership which is clearly focused on raising standards further and managing curricular change and development. There is a highly effective team approach to the implementation and review of school development work by all members of staff.
- The school has established and continues to strengthen good links with the parents and the local community. A variety of opportunities is provided for the parents to provide feedback and to make suggestions about the life and work of the school and a parents' support organisation and parent volunteers play an active role within the school. The school has established purposeful curricular links with the local pre-school setting, the local maintained primary school and with post-primary schools in the wider area. Effective links have also been established with local businesses through initiatives, such as, the 'Formula One' competition.

- The governors support the Principal and the staff well in the implementation of the school development plan. They are enthusiastic about the school and make a very positive contribution to its life and work. The staff provides the governors with appropriate information regarding the achievements and standards of the children. The school is well maintained.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, 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 area needs to be addressed. Arrangements have been made, but have not yet been completed for sufficient governors to attend update training in recruitment and selection.
- In discussions with the year 6 children, they indicated that they feel happy in school and that they know who to speak to if they have concerns about their well-being.
- It is important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues in relation 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.

CONCLUSION

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.

6. Summary of questionnaire responses

PARENTAL QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Issued to the school	46
Number of Questionnaires Returned	33
Percentage of Returns	71.73%
Number of Comments	22

Almost all of the responses from the parental questionnaires indicated a high level of satisfaction with the provision in the school. In particular, the parents acknowledged the very good level of pastoral care, the high level of commitment of all staff, and the leadership of the Principal.

In discussions with the governors, they expressed their appreciation of the teachers' efforts to ensure a balance between developing the children as individuals and achieving the highest possible standards in learning. They emphasised the importance of the school in the local community.

TEACHERS QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Returned	6
Number of Comments	2

SUPPORT STAFF QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Returned	7
Number of Comments	2

All of the teachers and most of the support staff completed the questionnaire. The staff indicated that they work well as a team; they are fully involved with the school development planning process and feel that their contributions are valued. The staff indicated that the Principal leads by example.

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