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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*

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



Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

**Ballywalter Primary School
Co Down**

April 2015

FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF BALLYWALTER PRIMARY SCHOOL, NEWTOWNARDS, CO DOWN, BT22 2NT (401-1566)

The focused inspection of Ballywalter Primary School in April 2013 highlighted strengths in the quality of the pastoral care, the children's enthusiasm about their learning, the good or better quality of the lessons observed and the good communication with the parents.

The inspection identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- to provide more effective strategic leadership and management at all levels to effect sustainable improvement in learning and teaching;
- to improve the provision and standards of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT); and
- for the teachers to develop a shared understanding of what constitutes effective learning and teaching, specifically in relation to differentiation and progression, in order to raise further the children's attainments.

The inspection conclusion in April 2013 stated:

"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 school development plan was adjusted appropriately in light of the inspection findings and the action plan produced by the school was of a very good quality. The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out two interim follow-up visits with a follow-up inspection on 29 April 2015.

In the interval since the inspection, the following actions which affect the work of the school have taken place.

- A new principal took up post in September 2013 and a new teacher was appointed.
- The staff have received very good professional development and support from the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service of the Education Authority: South-Eastern Region in a number of areas including play based learning, numeracy and leadership and management.
- The roles and responsibilities of the co-ordinators have been reviewed.
- The senior leadership team and co-ordinators have developed more robust systems for monitoring and evaluating the provision for learning and the standard of the work the children achieve.
- The staff have made better use of the school's internal data to identify those children who are under- or over- achieving in their learning.
- An enclosed outdoor play area for the foundation stage children has been developed.

- The staff have engaged in continuous professional development to support them in their work.
- The review of the provision for special educational needs has included a more strategic programme of withdrawal sessions and a review of the format for the children's individual education plans.
- A new format for the teachers' planning of the curriculum has been developed.
- The children have more opportunities to use ICT to enhance their learning.

The following improvements have taken place since the previous inspection in April 2013.

- The school's internal performance data shows that almost all of the children, including those children who require additional support with aspects of their learning, are achieving in line with their ability or above expectation in both literacy and numeracy. There is clear evidence to show that the quality of the children's work and the standards they achieve have improved significantly.
- By year 7, the children are able to use and apply a wide range of mathematical strategies to solve problems in real-life contexts; they are very competent and confident in their application of the mental mathematics strategies.
- The further development of the roles and responsibilities of the middle management team and the introduction of a rigorous programme of monitoring and evaluation have made significant improvements in the quality of the learning and teaching across the key stages.
- Through the review of the teachers' planning there is better differentiation to meet the needs of all of the children and there are planned opportunities for the children to work in pairs and engage in group activities. The staff have reviewed the planning for the play-based learning programme, there are good opportunities for the children to engage in role play. It will be important that the programme for play continues to be developed to ensure that the activities are challenging and build upon the children's previous learning.
- There is now a more consistent approach to the learning and teaching within the classrooms; the lessons have a clear structure, are well paced, clear learning intentions are shared at the beginning of the lesson and the success criteria are outlined and re-visited throughout the lesson. The plenary is used well to focus the children on their learning.
- The quality of the teaching observed during the follow-up inspection process indicates that the teaching is now consistently of a good quality; three-quarters of the lessons observed were outstanding and very good in equal measure.
- There are increased opportunities for the younger children to 'mark make' and write as part of their play programme, as a result, they are now more confident to 'have a go' at writing extended stories.

- The provision for special educational needs is now a particular strength of the school's provision; the withdrawal sessions are well planned, clearly focused on learning, well paced and use a wide range of active learning strategies to meet the needs of all the children. The targets on the new individual education plans are shared with the parents and the children evaluate their own progress. The children's learning in the withdrawal sessions is now more closely linked to their learning in the classroom.

Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is now 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.

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