

PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Ballinderry Primary School
and Nursery Unit, Lower
Ballinderry, Co Antrim

Report of an Inspection in
March 2015

eti

*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

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



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%

Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels in reports:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

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1. Inspection method and evidence base

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of primary schools, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self-evaluation* at: <http://www.eti.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-primary.htm>.

Inspectors observed teaching and learning, scrutinised documentation and the children's written work and held formal and informal discussions with children, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with representatives from the governors;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

A minority of the parents and almost all of the staff (teaching and non-teaching) responded to the questionnaires. The responses to the parental questionnaires indicated high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school, particularly how happy their children are at the school. The staff who completed questionnaires were very positive about their work. They emphasised how pleasant it was to work in the school and how all staff, including the principal and vice-principal, work closely together to meet the needs of the children. The governors expressed their appreciation of the hard work and dedication of the senior leaders and staff. The ETI has reported to the principal and representatives of the board of governors the main findings and any issues emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

2. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

1. the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy, in particular, how the school is addressing low attainment and underachievement where applicable;
2. the quality of provision for literacy and numeracy in the school; and
3. the quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

Ballinderry Primary School and Nursery Unit is situated in the village of Lower Ballinderry, about six miles north of Moira in County Antrim. Almost all of the children come from the villages of Lower and Upper Ballinderry, Aghalee and the surrounding areas. The school has a nursery unit that has 26 children attending on a part-time basis. The total enrolment, including those attending the nursery unit, has fluctuated over the last four years and currently stands at 222 children. The percentage of children on the special education needs register has fluctuated slightly over the last four years and is currently 22%; the percentage of children entitled to free school meals has increased by three percent to 12%. The school promotes shared education through a Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) funded project with the neighbouring maintained primary school.

Ballinderry Primary School	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Total enrolment (yrs 1 – 7)	199	206	203	196
nursery unit children	26	26	26	26
% Attendance	96%	96%	96%	96%
FSME Percentage ¹	9%	8%	12%	12%
% of children on SEN register	21%	18%	20%	22%
No. of children with statements of educational needs	6	6	6	8
No. of newcomers	*	*	*	*

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than five children

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall Performance Level	Outstanding
Achievements and Standards	Outstanding
Provision	Outstanding
Leadership and Management	Outstanding
Nursery Unit	Outstanding

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are happy and well-motivated; they settle quickly to their learning and respond positively to the activities provided by their teachers. They work well individually, in pairs and in groups. The children's behaviour is exemplary in class, in the corridors and in the playground. They are respectful towards their peers, the staff and visitors to the school.
- The school's internal assessment data shows that most of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make very good progress in English and mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation.
- Across the school, the children have very good listening skills and express themselves confidently through meaningful class and group discussions. They read fluently, with expression and understanding, and display consistent levels of interest in reading for enjoyment. By year 7, the most able readers discuss maturely the material they are reading and their favourite authors, and justify confidently and competently their choices and opinions. The quality and accuracy of the children's written work across the curriculum is of a very high standard; they plan, draft and edit their work from an early age and write in a variety of forms for a range of purposes and audiences.
- The children show a positive attitude to, and enthusiasm for, engaging with the many problem-solving activities planned by the teachers during numeracy lessons. They develop a high level of skill in using a wide range of mental mathematics strategies. By year 7, the more able children are secure in their knowledge of important mathematical ideas and concepts, such as number patterns, place value, three-dimensional shapes and estimation.

¹ The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

- The children are relaxed and happy in the nursery unit and their behaviour is very good at all times. They are making very good progress in all areas of the pre-school programme and display high levels of interest and concentration in the wide range of stimulating activities provided in both the indoor and outdoor environments. The children are making very good progress in developing their language, independence, self-management and social skills.
- The children attain appropriate skills in key aspects of information and communication technology (ICT), such as word processing to draft and edit on screen. They use software effectively to consolidate what they have learnt and present it to their peers, for example, the use of book creator software on the iPad.

6. Provision

- The teachers' planning is comprehensive and well informed by a thorough evaluation of the children's previous learning and detailed knowledge of their individual needs. In the most effective lessons, in about four-fifths of the lessons observed, there were: highly effective working relationships; suitably challenging activities that were matched well to the children's abilities; and, appropriate opportunities for paired and group discussions, which often led to children presenting confidently and articulately their conclusions during effective plenary sessions. In addition, the teachers, through their skilful questioning, created opportunities for the children to discuss and agree the success criteria with which they, their peers and the teachers would assess the learning. ICT was used appropriately to enhance the quality of learning and teaching.
- The school has developed a rigorous and coherent approach to the whole-school development of the children's language and literacy skills; this ensures that all aspects of literacy are taught in a connected, integrated way, using an appropriate range of strategies and stimulating resources to enrich and extend the children's learning. The highly effective teaching of writing is a particular strength in the school; the children have very good opportunities to plan, edit and redraft their work and to write in meaningful contexts across the curriculum. The well-planned and creative play-based and activity-based learning sessions, in both the school and the nursery unit, provide the children with valuable opportunities to use and develop their language and literacy skills.
- There is a consistent approach to numeracy planning across the school arising from detailed and thorough long-term planning which provides effective guidance to ensure progression. The numeracy lessons are well-structured and, at appropriate times, include engaging and challenging problem-solving activities which allow the children to work in groups and pairs. In the most effective practice, the children are given opportunities to collaborate to reach solutions and to explain their reasoning to each other and the rest of the class.
- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning demonstrate highly positive dispositions to learning and are integrated sensitively into the whole-class activities. The early identification and appropriate intervention ensures that the children benefit from effective individually tailored support both in class and during withdrawal sessions. A key strength of the provision is the thorough and rigorous tracking of the intervention strategies and their impact on the children's learning, progress and outcomes. The children's

individual education plans, which are drawn up in consultation with the class teacher and the special educational needs co-ordinator, are detailed and clearly set out precise and measurable targets for the children. These targets are reviewed regularly and carefully to ensure that the provision continues to meet the children's individual needs. A strength of the individual education plans is the meaningful involvement of the children in setting and reviewing their own personal learning targets; this has had a positive and significant impact on the children's learning and on their self-esteem.

- The positive working relationships at all levels foster an inclusive and settled ethos in the nursery unit. The staff are caring and supportive in their approach; they listen attentively to the children, take account of their ideas and promote skilfully the children's language development. The quality of their interaction with the children is consistently of a very high standard. The staff plan together and work well in partnership with the school to provide an interesting and progressively challenging pre-school programme that meets effectively the needs of all of the children.
- The pastoral care provision within the school and nursery unit is outstanding. The caring, inclusive ethos is underpinned by the core values of the school, where the rights and the voice of every child are of paramount importance. As a result, the children develop a sense of their own worth, a respect for others and an awareness that they can bring about change. The positive approach to promoting good behaviour, devised in consultation with the children, is embedded well throughout the school and supports effectively the children's development of personal responsibility, self-management and leadership skills. The school has been awarded the level two Rights Respecting Schools status.
- The school and nursery unit give very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, through the effective implementation of a healthy eating policy and a wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles. The children have opportunities to plant and grow fruit and vegetables in the school garden which they harvest to make their healthy snacks. The school has received the Action Cancer Gold Health Award for the last five years.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership and management of the school are highly effective. Over the last four years, the senior leaders have overseen successfully important development work in numeracy and literacy, while maintaining, and building on, a commitment to fulfilling appropriate pastoral, environmental and community-based aims. They have sustained a clear focus on improving the children's learning experiences and achievements, through, for example, the highly effective use of the school's performance data. In particular, the senior leaders and teachers use this data to: monitor the progress of the children; distinguish between low and under-achievement; diagnose individual children's difficulties; and, to identify aspects of literacy and numeracy which need to be developed further in the curricular planning. A high priority is placed on staff development and the inspection has confirmed that the educational and pastoral provision has benefitted greatly because of this commitment.

- The school development planning process is highly effective and is underpinned by wide consultation with staff, governors, parents and children and the self-evaluative reports compiled by co-ordinators who have responsibility for specific areas of the school's pastoral and educational work. These evaluations are based on comprehensive evidence arising from lesson observations, the scrutiny of the work in the children's books, the teachers' weekly planning and the teachers' evaluations of the learning that has taken place in lessons. The school development plan is continually under review and reflects and informs appropriately the improvement work of the staff.
- The school has very strong, effective links and partnerships with the parents and the wider community which enrich and extend the children's learning experiences. The staff value the parents as partners in developing their children's learning and arrange events in order to inform them about aspects of the curriculum, particularly literacy and numeracy. There are appropriate procedures in place to keep parents informed about their child's progress. The parent teacher association has supported the purchase of 20 iPads, which are used effectively by the children to support and enhance their learning.
- The governors are very well informed of the work and life of the school, particularly through the regular evaluative reports written and presented by the co-ordinators. They are actively involved in the school development planning process and provide an appropriate challenge function for the work of the principal and vice-principal. Based on the evidence presented at the time of the inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance inspected.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school and nursery unit have comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. In discussions with the inspectors, the year 6 children reported that they feel very secure in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their well-being.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The school has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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