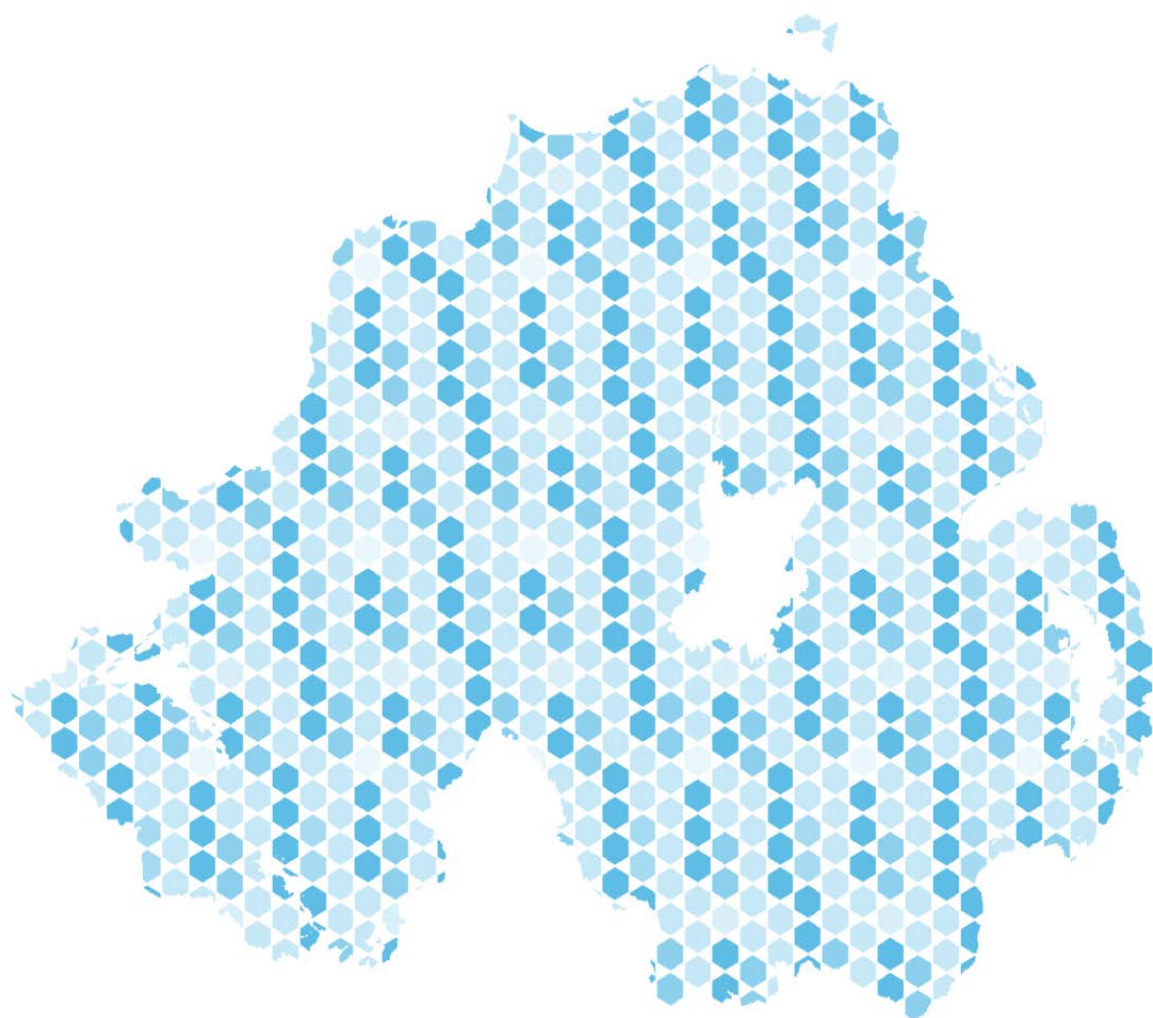


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Ballysally Primary School and
Learning Support Centres,
Coleraine, Co Antrim

Report of an Inspection in
December 2013

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
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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.etini.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.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parent	163	12	7%	5
Teachers	14	10	71%	7
Support Staff	16	9	56%	*

* fewer than 5

All of the parents expressed very high levels of satisfaction with the educational and pastoral provision in the school. In particular the parents praised the devoted, caring staff, the inclusive ethos, and the importance of the school in the local community. Most of the teachers, classroom assistants and a small number of support staff completed the questionnaire; nearly all of the responses were positive about almost all aspects of school life. In particular, the staff commented on their enjoyment of working in the school and the excellent working relationships among all the staff.

The Education and training Inspectorate (ETI) is trialling a range of methods for collecting the views of parents about the life and work of the school. As a result, the response rate to the parent questionnaires may be low.

2. Context

Ballysally Primary School is situated in a large housing estate on the outskirts of Coleraine. Nearly all of the children come from the local area. While the enrolment is steady, the school population fluctuates during the course of each year due to migration of children to and from other areas of Northern Ireland (NI). The percentage of children requiring additional support with their learning and those entitled to free school meals has increased significantly over the last four years. In addition to the mainstream classes, year 1 to year 7, the school provides two designated learning support centres and a nurture room. The area which the school serves experiences significant levels of unemployment and social deprivation.

Ballysally Primary School	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Enrolment	192	190	195	220
Enrolment in LSC	29	31	26	21
% Attendance (NI Average)	94.2%	95.2%	95.5%	-
FSME Percentage ¹	58%	72%	72%	72%
% of children on SEN register	16%	35%	33%	39.5%
% of children with statements of educational needs	16%	16.8%	12.8%	8.6%
No. of newcomers	0	0	0	1

Source: data as held by the school.

*fewer than 5

3. Focus of inspection

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.

4. Overall finding

Overall Performance Level	Very Good
Achievements and Standards	Good
Provision	Very good
Leadership and Management	Very good
Learning Support centre	Very good

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are very welcoming, well motivated and their behaviour is exemplary. They engage enthusiastically with the learning process and articulate well their ideas and opinions. They are very willing to help others, interact confidently with their peers, take pride in their achievements and present their work to a good standard.

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

- An analysis of the end of key stage (KS) 2 performance data in the mainstream school shows that in three of the past four years² the school's performance in English and mathematics has been well below the Northern Ireland average. Correspondingly, the levels of attainment in English and mathematics remain below the average when compared with schools in the same free school meals category. Although the end of key stage outcomes are low, the school's internal performance data shows that there is an improving trend in both English and mathematics. An analysis of the schools internal data demonstrates that most of the children, in the mainstream school, make good progress in English and mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation. In addition, the data shows that almost all of the children in the learning support centres make very good progress in English and mathematics in line with their ability or better than expected.
- By the end of KS2, the most able children read with fluency, expression and good understanding. They are enthusiastic and confident when discussing their favourite authors and characters from their novels. Most of the children's written work is of a good standard. As they progress through the school the children write with imagination for an increasing range of audiences and purposes. The introduction of thinking maps, across all the classes, supports and enhances the children's writing as they develop skills of planning, drafting and editing. By year 7, the children assess regularly their own and others' work leading to further improvement. The children enjoy and participate enthusiastically in mathematics lessons and they use mathematical language with increasing confidence and competence. By the end of KS2, the most able children display a good understanding of the important concepts across the areas of mathematics. They are able to complete mathematical calculations quickly, can explain their chosen strategy and, when prompted, display a good level of flexibility in providing alternative strategies.
- The children achieve very good standards in their use of information and communication technology (ICT). By the end of KS2, all of the children in the mainstream, achieve the expected level in the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), accreditation and enjoy using ICT in their learning.

6. Provision

- The school gives a high priority to the development of literacy and numeracy. There is a coherent, whole-school approach to the arrangements for planning, teaching and assessment of literacy and numeracy. Reading is taught in a systematic and progressive manner and writing skills are well connected to the reading programme. The emphasis on talking and listening skills during class activities develops well the children's self esteem and confidence. There is a well-balanced programme for mathematics throughout the school. The teachers make very good use of appropriate structured practical activities to motivate the children, extend their thinking and develop their mathematical language and understanding.

² Due to the current transition period in the arrangements for statutory assessment, this analysis of the end of KS2 performance data is based on the outcomes up to but not including the 2012/13 school year

- The quality of the learning and teaching in nearly all of the lessons observed was good or better and in three-fifths it was very good or outstanding. In the most effective practice, the teachers built on the children's prior knowledge, and established effective connections across the areas of learning relevant to the children's own experiences. The lessons were well paced with ample opportunities provided for active learning through well differentiated group and paired work. Nearly all of the teachers used assessment for learning strategies very well in daily class teaching which helped the children to reflect on and improve their work. The teachers made effective use of ICT to support learning and teaching. The classroom assistants provided valuable support to the teachers and children.
- The special education needs co-ordinator works very effectively with the class teachers to ensure that the school provides well-tailored support for those children identified as having difficulty with aspects of their learning. The individual education plans are concise and set out clearly the children's strengths and needs with appropriate targets to guide the work of all staff. The classroom assistants play a valuable role in supporting children through an effective Reading Partnership programme and the school's data shows that most of these children make good progress in their reading. Further support for learning is provided by outside agencies, including the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) Literacy Teaching and Support Service and the Multi Agency Support Teams for Schools (MASTS). There is very effective liaison and sharing of information between school staff and outside agencies to support the children's learning.
- The teachers and classroom assistants in the learning support centres know the children well and address very effectively their learning difficulties through a wide range of appropriate, differentiated activities. The children settle well, make very good progress in their learning and gain self-confidence; they develop very good social skills through the well-chosen inclusion activities with their peers in the mainstream of the school.
- A safe and inviting nurture centre has been developed to meet the needs of the children unable to engage fully in their mainstream classes. The staff design an individual, holistic profile of needs for each child. They use effective support strategies to develop the children's social and emotional skills alongside work appropriate to their key stage. The nurturing programme is a life changing learning experience for many children and their families.
- The quality of the provision for pastoral care is outstanding. The staff are highly committed to the care and well being of all the children. Working relationships are outstanding at all levels and are characterised by mutual respect. The school motto, "Learning Through Nurturing" permeates the life and work of the school. The school's underpinning child-centred philosophy to life and learning is exemplified in the daily practice which fosters and values the children's qualities and strengths.
- The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy lifestyles through the curriculum topics and the good emphasis placed on healthy eating and the importance of physical exercise.

7. Leadership and management

- The innovative principal provides outstanding strategic leadership and is highly committed to meeting the needs of all the children and the wider community. He develops a collegial approach amongst all the staff and a very inclusive ethos involving the parents, staff and community. The vice-principal and co-ordinators provide highly skilled support and are empowered to lead and manage their areas of responsibility cohesively. Together, with the rest of the staff team, they maintain a clear focus on the continuous improvement of all aspects of the school's provision. The school improvement process is clearly linked to a well constructed school development plan (SDP). The key priorities of the school development plan concentrate appropriately on improving further the quality of the children's learning experiences and the standards that they attain.
- The school gives a high priority to establishing and developing meaningful links with the local community in order to support and extend further the children's learning experiences and to enable the parents to support the children in their learning. Through ongoing consultation with the parents and community workers, the school has organised a number of appropriate social and educational events, under the extended schools programme and through involvement in the Coleraine Education Community Project that enhances the social and learning experiences of the children and Ballysally community.
- The governors carry out their roles conscientiously and supportively; they understand well the challenges and opportunities facing the school. Based on the evidence presented at the time of the inspection, the parents, staff and school community can have a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has comprehensive arrangements for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The children report that they feel safe and secure in school and know who to speak to if they have any concerns about their safety and well-being.

8. 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.

Health and safety

- There is a need to review the open access from the playground to the main entrance gates. It will be important, for the safety and security of all children, that this is completed at the earliest opportunity.

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