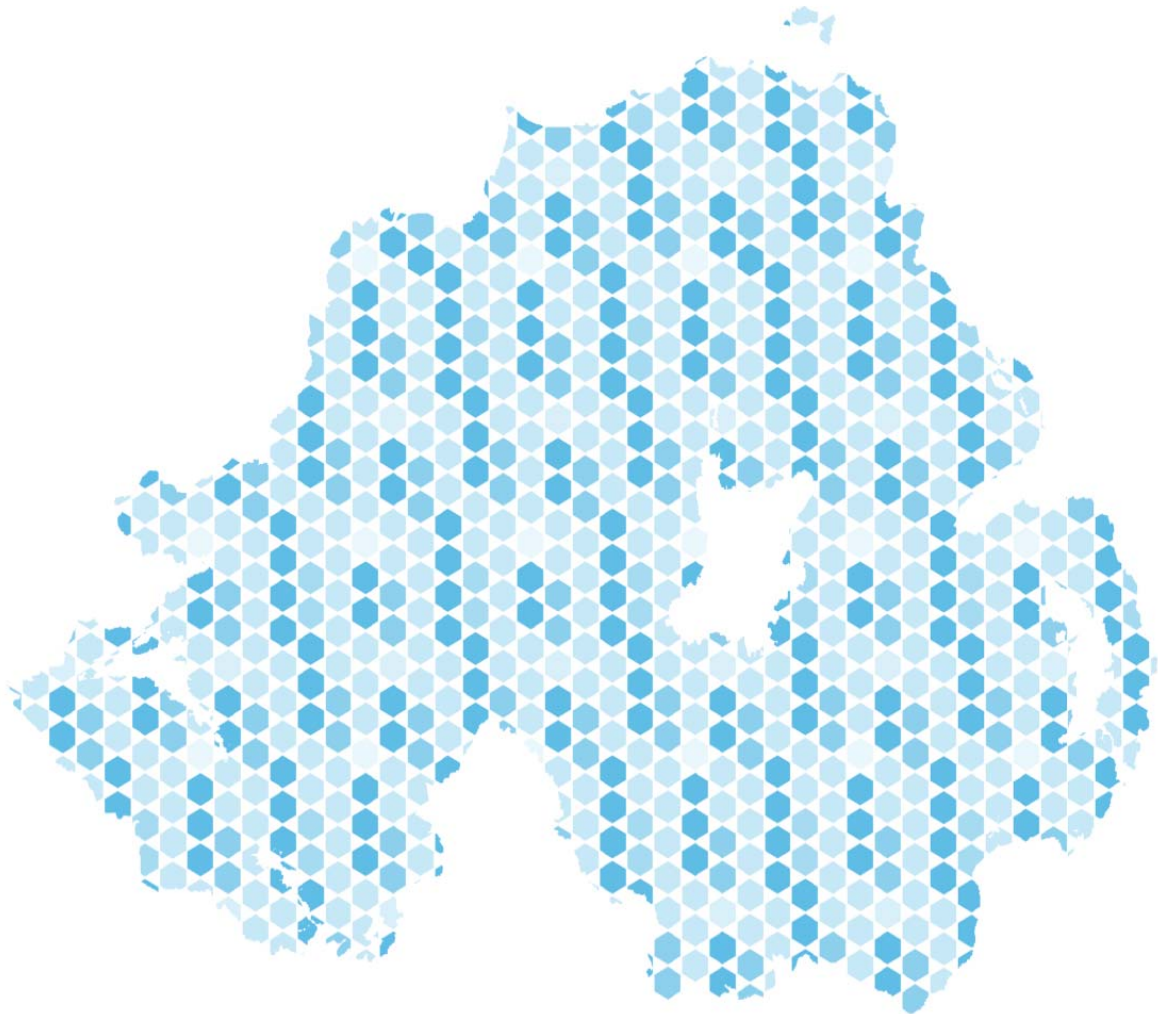


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Harding Memorial Primary  
School, Belfast

Report of an inspection  
in May 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 |

## BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Harding Memorial Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 10/05/10**  
 ii. **School Reference Number: 101-0232** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

| School Year       | 2005/06 | 2006/07 | 2007/08 | 2008/09 | 2009/10 |
|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Year 1 Intake     | 29      | 31      | 27      | 27      | 23      |
| <b>Enrolments</b> |         |         |         |         |         |
| Primary           | 301     | 292     | 258     | 227     | 200     |
| Reception         | 0       | 0       | 0       | 0       | 0       |
| Nursery Unit      | 0       | 0       | 0       | 0       | 0       |
| Special Unit      | 0       | 0       | 0       | 0       | 0       |
| Irish Medium Unit | 0       | 0       | 0       | 0       | 0       |

The enrolment for the current year is the figure on the day of notification of inspection. For previous years it is the figure in the annual return to the Department of Education.

The calculations at C and D should be based on the total of the primary and reception enrolments only.

- C. Average Attendance for the Previous School Year (expressed as a percentage): 94.8% **NI Avg Att: 94.9%**
- |  | Primary & Reception   | Nursery Unit              | Special Unit | Irish Medium Unit |
|--|---|---------------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| D. i. Number of Teachers (including the principal and part-time teachers):<br>(Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)   | 10  | 0                         | 0            | 0                 |
| ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio):   | 20.0  | NI PTR: 20.4              |              |                   |
| iii. Average Class Size:   | 22.2  |                           |              |                   |
| iv. Class Size (Range):  | 17 to 27  |                           |              |                   |
| v. Ancillary Support:<br>Number of Hours <b>Per Week</b> :   | i. Clerical support:  | 30                        |              |                   |
|  | ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support:           | 44.2                      |              |                   |
|  | iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 46.2                      |              |                   |
| vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs:   | 1%  |                           |              |                   |
| vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register:   | 22%   |                           |              |                   |
| viii. Number of children who are <b>not</b> of statutory school age:   | 0   |                           |              |                   |
| ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals:  | 14.5%   |                           |              |                   |
| x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2008/09 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics: | <b>English</b><br>61%                                       | <b>Mathematics</b><br>80% |              |                   |

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT**

Harding Memorial Primary School is situated on the Cregagh Road in East Belfast. Almost all of the children who attend the school come from the local area. The enrolment has decreased over recent years and is currently 200. The school reports that approximately 15% of the children are entitled to free school meals and 22% of the children have been identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

### **1.2 FOCUS**

The inspection focused on the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy, the quality of provision for learning 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.

### **1.3 THE VIEWS OF THE PARENTS, TEACHERS, SUPPORT STAFF, GOVERNORS AND CHILDREN**

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents, the teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection as well as meetings with representatives of the Board of Governors (governors) and a group of children from year 6. Of the 114 questionnaires issued to the parents, 30% were returned to Inspection Services Branch, including 16 which contained additional written comments. Most of the parental questionnaires and written comments indicated high levels of satisfaction with the work of the school. The parents highlighted, in particular, the hardworking staff, the school's standing in the local community and the leadership of the Principal. A minority of the parents raised concerns in relation to aspects of teaching and learning. Almost all of the responses from the teachers and the support staff were positive regarding the work of the school. The teachers highlighted the sense of teamwork and the supportive working environment within the school.

All of the issues raised through the questionnaires were shared with the Principal and the governors.

The governors expressed their appreciation of the leadership of the Principal and the commitment of the staff, and their support for the school's links with the local community.

The year 6 children indicated that they feel happy and secure in school and are aware of what to do if they have any worries about their safety or well-being. They spoke enthusiastically about the wide range of extra-curricular activities and the variety of rewards in place to celebrate their contributions and to acknowledge good behaviour.

### **1.4 PASTORAL CARE**

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is very good. The strengths of the pastoral provision include: the strong sense of community and inclusion that permeates the life and work of the school; the very good behaviour of the children; the very good procedures for communicating with parents and the effective ways in which the school has consulted with the children in revising the anti-bullying policy.

## 1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

## 1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. The children participate in a wide range of sporting activities and the school council has been responsible for the purchasing of new playground equipment which is used creatively during break and lunch time.

## 1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The school encourages and facilitates greater parental involvement in supporting their children's learning through, for example, regular newsletters, and curriculum information and guidance booklets. The recent parental questionnaire is being used effectively to inform the further development of aspects of the provision, in particular, the review of pastoral policies. Effective links with the local community and a local post primary school support and enhance the children's learning experiences.

## 2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

### 2.1 LEARNING

The children work well with their peers and teachers and are keen to talk about their learning. When given the opportunity, they demonstrated very high levels of engagement and motivation in their learning. They take pride in their written work which is always well presented.

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 data over the past four years shows that in English and mathematics the school's performance is below the Northern Ireland (NI) average. Compared with schools in the same free school meals category, the levels of attainment in English and mathematics are below the average.

### 2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The quality of the provision for English and literacy is satisfactory. The standards achieved by the children in English are satisfactory. The recently appointed literacy coordinator has identified the need to review and update the literacy policy and schemes. The inspection findings would strongly endorse this action.

In most of the classes the teachers promote talking and listening effectively through open questioning and paired and small group work. When given the opportunity, the children can communicate their ideas and feelings using an expanding vocabulary.

In the foundation stage (FS), the children become familiar with different forms of print and experiment with informal mark making. 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 their skills develop, the children's independent writing is promoted appropriately; by the end of KS1, the majority of children can express their ideas with a length and quality of content appropriate to their ability. As they progress through KS2, the children extend their range of writing styles and in the samples of work available during the inspection there were opportunities to write for a variety of purposes and audiences; in a minority of the samples the standard of writing was very good. In both key

stages, the teachers need to plan for and provide a wider range of more open ended contexts for writing, with less reliance on work-sheets, in order to foster the children's creativity and to provide greater challenge. ICT was used effectively to support learning; in year 7, the children were making appropriate use of the internet for research purposes alongside dictionaries, atlases and thesauri, and to edit and draft their work.

In the FS and KS1 there are very good examples of the children being provided with a language rich environment which promotes effectively their interest in books and the written word; this needs to be provided for more consistently, across all the classes. The children have regular opportunities to explore books and to listen to stories; the children give good levels of oral response to the text. Effective use is made of big books to teach reading and as a stimulus for writing, talking and listening. The children acquire basic reading skills through the development of phonological awareness and exposure to modelled and shared reading; they use these skills to assist them in reading unfamiliar text. By the end of KS1, most of the children read with a good level of fluency, understanding and enjoyment. In KS2 the children have regular opportunities to develop their reading skills through guided reading, daily independent reading and the use of the school library. In the best practice, guided reading takes place in small groups where the children have the opportunity to discuss the text and are encouraged to use a range of strategies to decode unfamiliar words. The school reading scheme is supplemented by a good range of fiction and non fiction books which are banded to support the children's independent reading. By the end of KS2 the majority of the children read with fluency and understanding.

### 2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The quality of the provision for mathematics and numeracy is satisfactory. The standards achieved by the children in mathematics are satisfactory. During the inspection the highest attaining children in years 4 and 7 demonstrated their ability to think mathematically across all areas of the numeracy programme and to talk with confidence about their experiences.

The programme for mathematics provides the children with a range of experiences in number, shape and space, measures and data-handling. Throughout the school the teachers make good use of a range of practical materials to develop the children's mathematical knowledge and understanding. The children have opportunities to engage in a variety of problem-solving and investigative mathematics; the very good practice observed in a minority of classes, where these experiences pervade all elements of the children's mathematical learning should be applied more consistently across the school. In the majority of numeracy lessons observed, the teachers' expectations for what the children were capable of achieving were too low and a slow pace undermined effective learning. The children have good opportunities to use their mathematical knowledge in meaningful contexts across the curriculum. Children in year 4, for example, explored the concept of symmetry through art, while in year 7 as part of a project on tropical rainforests, the children analysed and graphically represented a range of climate data. Mental mathematics sessions were observed in most classes. In a minority of these the pace was good, the activities engaged and motivated the children and the teachers used good questioning techniques to challenge the children's thinking and to encourage them to explain their strategies.

The co-ordinator provides effective leadership and has a clear vision for the development of mathematics within the school. She is a very good role-model for good practice and she supports her colleagues in implementing the programme; for example, she has lead workshops to develop the use of ICT to support learning and teaching in mathematics. She

recognises the need to develop her role in monitoring and evaluating the quality and effectiveness of the planning, learning and teaching of mathematics across the school and to plan more systematically for whole school development focused on raising the standards attained by the children.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING**

#### **3.1 PLANNING**

The teachers plan conscientiously and the medium term planning is coherent and provides a clear overview of progression in the children's learning. The teachers need to focus their short-term planning more on the intended learning and associated success criteria. During the inspection there were some examples of evaluations and observations used effectively by teachers to inform future planning.

#### **3.2 TEACHING**

The quality of the teaching in the lessons observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding; with the majority of the teaching being good or better. In the best practice observed, the lessons were characterised by very good working relationships, appropriate differentiation to meet the range of abilities, effective questioning and appropriately high expectations. In the less effective practice, the learning intentions were unclear and there was an over-emphasis on teacher direction. In a significant minority of the lessons, there was insufficient challenge in the learning and the children became disengaged.

#### **3.3 ASSESSMENT**

The children's work is marked regularly; marking is positive and constructive across all years. The school has begun to make good use of a wide range of data, including standardised scores, to measure and track the progress made in year groups. The school needs to build upon this and use the data to set individual and whole school targets to improve the standards achieved by all the children in English and mathematics.

#### **3.4 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

The quality of the provision for children with special educational needs (SEN) is good. The school works effectively with a number of outside agencies to further enhance the provision for those children who have been identified by the school as being in need of additional learning support, including children with learning difficulties in literacy and numeracy, and a small number who have social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. There is evidence that the majority of children make appropriate progress under this provision. The recently appointed special educational needs co-ordinator has begun the process of reviewing the quality of the provision.

### **4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

#### **4.1 LEADERSHIP**

The Principal provides good leadership. Since his appointment in November 2008, he has led a number of important curricular and pastoral developments which he monitors effectively. He has a clear knowledge and understanding of the needs of the school and has identified appropriate areas for improvement, including the need to develop leadership at all levels, and, in particular, the need to develop the role of co-ordinators in monitoring and evaluating aspects of the school's provision.



## 4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

The school development plan (SDP) meets the requirements of The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005. The staff development programme is linked appropriately to the SDP priorities. The SDP needs to be adjusted in light of the findings of the inspection.

## 4.3 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The very recently formed board of governors has a good knowledge of the school and its roles and responsibilities within the strategic planning and policy development for the school.

## 4.4 ACCOMMODATION

The staff make good use of the accommodation throughout the school and the outdoor areas. Good use is made of displays to celebrate the children's work and achievements.

## 5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the very good quality of the pastoral care;
- the effective links established with the community which support and enhance the children's learning experiences;
- the very good behaviour of the children who, when given the opportunity, show high levels of engagement and motivation in their learning;
- the quality of the teaching which in a majority of the lessons observed was good or better;
- the good quality of the arrangements for special educational needs; and
- the good leadership provided by the Principal.

5.2 The areas for improvement include the need to:

- provide greater challenge, to meet more effectively the needs of all of the children and raise the standards they attain in English and mathematics; and
- develop the role of the co-ordinators in monitoring and evaluating key aspects of the school's provision.

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 which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over an 18-24 month period.

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