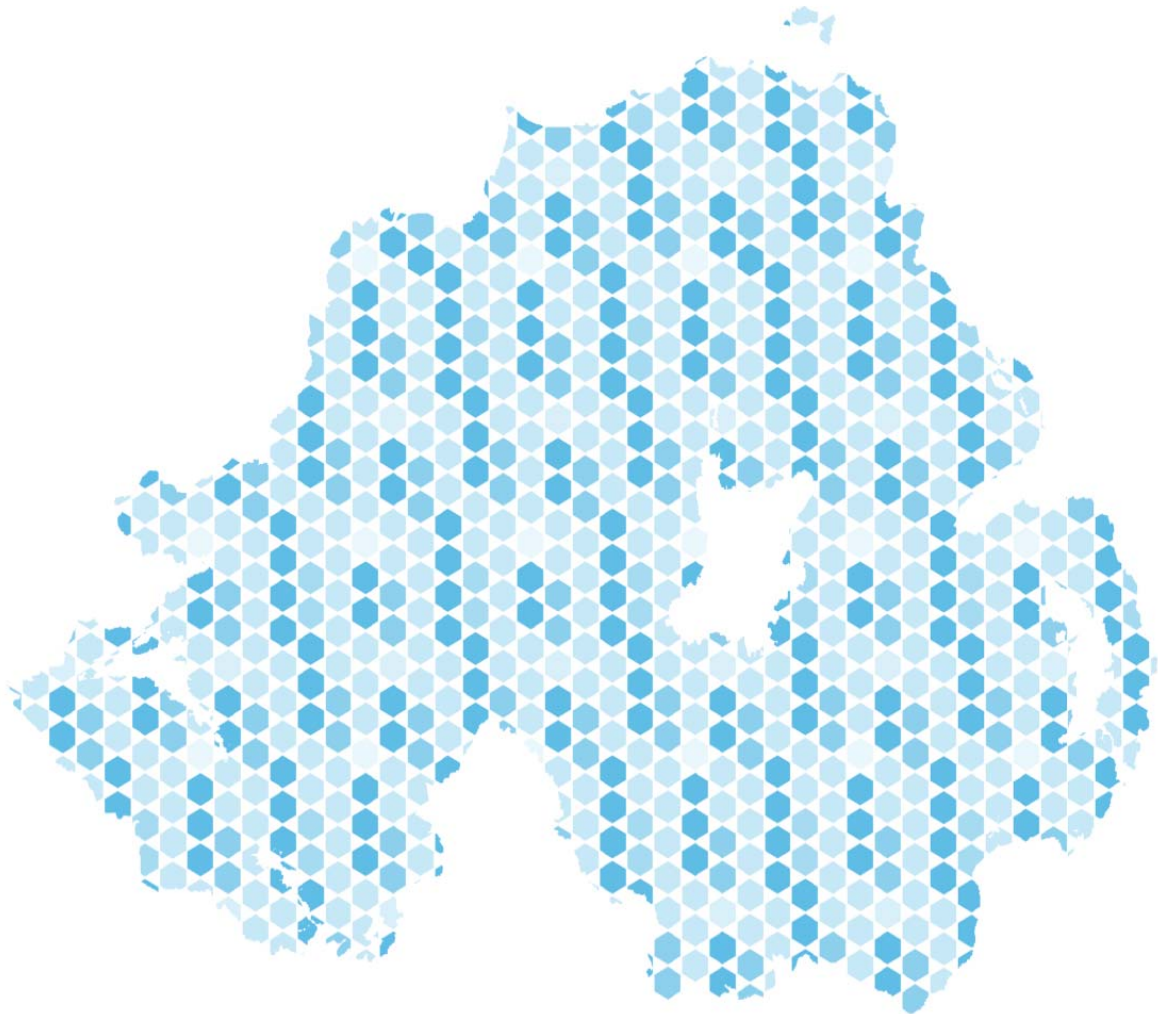


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Hollybank Primary School,  
Monkstown, Newtownabbey

Report of an Inspection  
in April 2010

## CONTENTS

| <b>Section</b> |                                       | <b>Page</b> |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|-------------|
|                | STATISTICAL INFORMATION               |             |
| 1.             | INTRODUCTION                          | 1           |
| 2.             | ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS            | 3           |
| 3.             | THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING | 4           |
| 4.             | LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT             | 6           |
| 5.             | CONCLUSION                            | 7           |
|                | APPENDIX                              |             |

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, the Inspectorate relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

|                   |
|-------------------|
| <b>DESCRIPTOR</b> |
| Outstanding       |
| Very Good         |
| Good              |
| Satisfactory      |
| Inadequate        |
| Unsatisfactory    |

## BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Hollybank Primary**  
**Monkstown, Newtownabbey**  
 ii. **School Reference Number: 301-6038**
- iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 19/04/2010**  
 iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

| School Year       | 2005/06 | 2006/07 | 2007/08 | 2008/09 | 2009/10 |
|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Year 1 Intake     | 31      | 23      | 23      | 26      | 15      |
| <b>Enrolments</b> |         |         |         |         |         |
| Primary           | 199     | 183     | 174     | 181     | 169     |
| 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):

93.5%

**NI Avg Att: 94.9%**

| Primary &<br>Reception | Nursery<br>Unit | Special<br>Unit | Irish Medium<br>Unit |
|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|

- D. i. Number of Teachers  
 (including the principal and part-time teachers): 9.4      0      0      0  
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 18.0      NI PTR: 20.4
- iii. Average Class Size: 24.14
- iv. Class Size (Range): 15 to 31
- v. Ancillary Support:  
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- |   |      |
|---|------|
| i. Clerical support:  | 30   |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support:           | 32.5 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 50   |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 1.2%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 18%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 29.58%
- 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>     | 71% |
| <b>Mathematics</b> | 48% |

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Hollybank Primary School is situated in Devenish Drive, within Monkstown Housing Estate, Co Antrim. The majority of the children come from the local area. The enrolment of the school has decreased over recent years and currently stands at 169 children. The school reports that approximately 29% of the children are entitled to free school meals. The school has identified approximately 19% of the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning.

### 1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on:

- the quality of the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy;
- the quality of provision for learning,
- the quality of leadership and management; and
- the school's arrangements for pastoral care and child protection.

The inspection also evaluated the contribution of information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting and supporting learning.

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

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents, the teaching and support staff to complete confidential questionnaires prior to the inspection. Meetings were held with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors), a group of parents and a representative group of children from years 6 and 7.

One hundred and twenty seven questionnaires were issued to parents; approximately 32% were returned to Inspection Services Branch of which 15 contained additional written comments. Nearly all of the responses indicated a high level of satisfaction with the school. In particular, the parents highlighted the quality of the communication links developed with the school, the high level of care and support provided by the Principal and the staff, the priority given to the behaviour, social development and welfare of the children, and the opportunities provided for the parents to attend a range of events and courses to support them and their children in their education and personal development. A small number of the responses raised concerns particularly in relation to the falling rolls, and aspects of the schools procedures related to teaching and learning. A small number of the parents took the opportunity to meet with a member of the team; they spoke of their high regard for the school and the quality of educational and pastoral support the school provides for the children.

Seven teachers and six support staff completed the on-line questionnaire and five of the teachers included written comments. The responses were wholly positive and supportive of the work of the school.

The governors expressed their appreciation of the work of the school and the commitment of the staff to the children. They also highlighted concerns about the children's safety due to the speed of the traffic on the main road at the front of the school at the beginning and end of the school day.

The children in year 6 spoke very positively and enthusiastically about all aspects of school life. They are aware of what to do if they have worries about their safety or well-being.

An analysis of the questionnaires and the written comments made by the parents and the staff were shared with the Principal and the governors.

#### 1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is outstanding. Among the strengths are the welcoming, inclusive and supportive ethos throughout the school, the effective strategies to promote positive behaviour and the consultation with the children in the compilation of class rules. Individual merit systems, for example, the 'Principal's Tea Party' are in place and are highly valued by the children; there is clear evidence that the reward system has a positive impact on the children's motivation, confidence and self-esteem. The relationships between the children and the staff are very positive. The staff give generously of their time to the broad range of after school activities provided for the children. The school is very well maintained; the staff make very effective use of all the available space both indoors and outdoors to create a bright and attractive learning environment. The highly dedicated and hard-working support staff contribute effectively to the children's learning and well-being.

The school has appropriately identified the benefit of establishing a council in order to involve the children more in the process of school improvement and to support more fully the significant work in maintaining a highly positive ethos.

#### 1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has good comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding the children and these reflect fully the guidance issued by the Department of Education (DE).

#### 1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, and to encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles. The children enjoy a variety of healthy eating experiences and there is a strong focus on promoting physical activity throughout the school.

#### 1.7 LINKS WITH THE PARENTS AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY

There is a strong sense of community within the school and the parents are encouraged at every opportunity to become involved in the school events and in supporting their children's learning. The Principal and the teachers work conscientiously to ensure that communication with the parents is effective and maintained through regular newsletters, a newly established school Web site, Open Days, information meetings and a range of valuable courses for parents. There are well-established and excellent links developed with the other local schools, including pre-school, primary and post primary schools which enrich the children's educational and social experiences and ensure smooth transitions.

## 2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

### 2.1 LEARNING

Most of the children settle quickly to their work and have positive attitudes to learning; they work well in pairs and groups, taking turns and encouraging and supporting one another in their learning. Priority is given to the development of their oral communication. They interact with developing confidence and demonstrate interest, engagement and skill in learning collaboratively through paired and group work. At foundation stage (FS), the children learn through a range of songs, rhymes and enriched activity-based experiences and most are able to sustain appropriate periods of concentrated and motivated play. They access equipment independently, discuss their learning, and a few collaborate on shared tasks.

### 2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The quality of provision for English and literacy is good.

The standards achieved in the Key Stage (KS) assessments are satisfactory. In 2009 the percentage of children achieving Level 4 and above corresponded with the Northern Ireland average for schools in a similar free school meals category, and there has been a marked upward trend over the past three years.

The teachers provide good opportunities for the children to develop oral skills through play-based learning in the FS and effective paired and group discussion in KS1 and KS2 in which the children are actively engaged. Through these well-structured activities, the children are enabled to acquire an increasingly wide vocabulary and use language appropriate to their learning.

The majority of the children read at a level corresponding with or above their chronological age; those who were observed reading, in FS, KS1 and KS2, did so with a good level of fluency and they were able to speak enthusiastically about the books they enjoyed. In the FS the children demonstrated good word attack skills when introduced to new reading books and unfamiliar words. These strategies are supported well by carefully selected and appropriately banded reading material. Enjoyment of reading is encouraged through regular visits to the well-stocked school library and through the wide range of attractive reading resources available in all classrooms.

The standard of writing, across a range of genres, in the children's books is good. There are good examples of emergent writing in the FS and good use is made of "Have a Go" books in KS1. Most of the children in KS2 write with a good level of accuracy and their progress is well supported by the teachers' written and verbal assessments. While there are good examples of poetry and narrative on display and in the children's books, the teachers should plan to provide more regular opportunities for creative writing and these should be included in lessons throughout the year.

The school has accessed support from the Raising Achievement in Literacy programme and to date has focused on embedding a synthetic phonics scheme, establishing a new spelling programme and developing comprehension skills in order to improve further the standards in literacy across the school. In most of the classes ICT is used well to support learning and teaching across the curriculum with teachers making good use of computer programmes, programmable devices and a suitable range of websites to enhance the children's learning experiences.

## 2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The overall quality of the provision for mathematics is satisfactory. By the end of KS1 the children achieve good standards in mathematics. An analysis of the KS2 assessment data over the past three years shows that, in mathematics, the school's performance has fluctuated but still remains below the NI average when compared to all primary schools and also those primary schools in a similar free school meals category.

The staff have recently introduced new initiatives such as Raising Achievement In Mathematics (RAIN) and Adaptive Learning Teaching and Assessment (ALTA) to help raise the standards in numeracy across the school. There is evidence to show that the new strategies adopted by the teachers are beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of the teaching and learning in mathematics across the school.

In the FS the teachers have created an attractive and stimulating environment which promotes effectively the children's mathematical development. Much emphasis is placed on play-based learning and the children are developing appropriate mathematical concepts, skills and language through a variety of games, activities and practical mathematics lessons which they clearly enjoy. In almost all of the lessons observed, the children were encouraged to take time to think, to ask questions and to talk about their learning. In group work, the children demonstrated a good understanding and use of Cuisenaire rods and a clear recognition of number words and associated mathematical symbols. Throughout the FS the children have opportunities to acquire a sound understanding of counting and number recognition, measures, shape and space, sorting and pattern and relationships. ICT is used effectively to support learning and teaching.

In KS1 the majority of the children display a positive attitude to mathematics; they engage co-operatively, show increasing independence and can talk confidently about their learning using appropriate mathematical language. In the lessons observed, the children demonstrated a good understanding of place value, pattern and number and showed flexibility in their mathematical thinking. In the best practice, the children were given appropriate opportunities to develop their ability to reason, to predict and to explain their findings.

In KS2, the work addresses the key areas of mathematics including number, shape and space, measures and handling data and is frequently linked to real life situations. In general, appropriate time is allocated to these aspects to allow steady progress to be made. In the best practice the intended learning was placed within everyday familiar contexts; the teachers built upon the children's previous knowledge and employed a range of teaching strategies; the lessons were well paced and pitched to meet the varying needs within the class and there was a good balance between whole class, group and paired work. During the inspection, the children demonstrated confidence in their understanding of measure, shape and space, they could work flexibly with number and engaged in a range of problem-solving activities. Many of the learning opportunities make good use of practical equipment and, in the best practice, ICT is used effectively to support learning and teaching.

## 3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

### 3.1 PLANNING

The teachers plan their work conscientiously and collaboratively. They have appropriately identified the need to adopt a more consistent approach to whole-school planning. The short-term planning identifies the intended learning outcomes, the resources and the assessment strategies to be used. In the most effective planning, there is evidence of appropriate differentiation, a continuum of experiences for the children and detailed written



evaluations of the progress and quality of the children's learning which is honest and accurately reflects and informs future planning and teaching. This good practice needs to be disseminated more widely with a clear emphasis on learning, building on children's interests, needs and views.

### 3.2 TEACHING

The quality of the teaching ranged from satisfactory, in a minority (13%) of the lessons, to outstanding, in a minority (13%) of the lessons observed. In almost two-thirds of the teaching of the lessons observed, the quality of the teaching was very good or better. In the most effective practice the lessons were well paced and had an effective developmental structure, the learning outcomes were well focused so that the children were clear about what they were expected to learn and they completed the tasks independently.

### 3.3 ASSESSMENT

The teachers use a suitable range of internal and standardised tests to assess the children's level of achievement in English and mathematics and to inform planning for the provision of additional learning support. They plan appropriately to introduce Non-Reading Intelligence Test assessment later this year.

The teachers mark the children's work regularly, and there are examples of good marking for improvement and positive comments to encourage the children and help them improve their work. In the FS all of the staff make regular and relevant observations of the children's responses to the play-based activities. The parents are kept well informed of their children's progress through regular interviews and written reports.

The school has identified the need for more effective use of the analysis of this performance data to track and evaluate the children's progress, identify trends and set appropriate targets in order to improve the standards of attainment in English and mathematics and to inform their whole-school self-evaluation processes. The Inspectorate endorses this as a key priority to promote improvement.

### 3.4 EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The quality of the provision for children with special educational needs is very good. The very inclusive and supportive ethos throughout the school promotes the children's confidence and self-esteem and ensures that every child is valued. High priority is given to early identification and intervention, and appropriate screening and diagnostic tests are used to identify the children's learning difficulties or delays and to inform the individual educational plans (IEPs). The IEPs set out specific targets and appropriate support strategies for the children in numeracy, literacy and behaviour. The staff use a variety of appropriate methods to record the children's responses and progress, for example, the 'individual records' for each child provide good evidence of the children's progress at the beginning of the focused support, during and at the end of the series of sessions.

The children's needs are met through additional support teaching in withdrawal sessions involving individual and small groups. During these sessions the learning support teacher and assistants were highly supportive of the children and used a good range of practical teaching strategies to develop the children's literacy and numeracy skills. The school has very recently introduced small group sessions focusing on promoting numeracy understanding and development. There is good communication and links between the special educational needs co-ordinator, the teachers and support staff and flexibility in the timetabling for the sessions to ensure that the needs of the children are given priority.

## **4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **4.1 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The Principal has played a key role in recent years in implementing new management structures and the development of the new middle management roles and responsibilities within the school. He is highly committed to the needs of the school and the wider community. He sets a positive tone for the work of the school through his very good working relationships at all levels. He encourages a collegiate approach to decision-making within the school and provides effective support and guidance in the professional development of the staff. He is ably supported by the recently-appointed Vice-principal who has contributed significantly to the more recent focus on RAIN and ALTA training. There is clear evidence of the impact of the Northern Ireland Curriculum (NIC) training being disseminated and embedded throughout the school. There are effective structures in place to develop further the role of curriculum and key stage co-ordinators. The literacy and numeracy co-ordinators have begun to monitor and evaluate aspects of the school's provision through a variety of useful methods establishing a culture of classroom observation and evaluation.

### **4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT**

A reflective culture of self-evaluation is being established within the school; the school has identified appropriate areas for further development which the inspection confirms. There is a collegial approach to school development planning which involves the staff in the audit of provision and in the setting of appropriate priorities and staff development needs. The school development plan meets the requirements of The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005. The Principal has placed a strong emphasis on raising standards in numeracy and literacy and has invested substantially in staff development which has been used very effectively to enhance the skills and knowledge of the teachers and support staff.

### **4.3 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE**

The school has a good range of resources to support the children with their learning, the activity areas within the FS provide very good opportunities and excellent facilities for the children to learn in a stimulating and enriching environment.

### **4.4 ACCOMMODATION**

The school accommodation consists of a main building which contains seven classrooms, an assembly hall which opens into the canteen, a library, a computer suite, an art room, a playroom, whiteboard rooms, a parent's room, a drama room and a reading partner's room. Very good use is made of all the available space in the school

The standard of caretaking is very good and the staff work hard to create bright and inviting classrooms and corridors celebrating the children's work. The accommodation provides well for the delivery of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. At the start and end of the school day there is congestion outside the school gates, the speed ramps are not effective in reducing the speed of the traffic. Currently, there is no Patrol Person to assist the children when crossing the road outside the school.

## 5. CONCLUSION

### 5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the very positive ethos which permeates the life and work of the school demonstrated by the outstanding pastoral care provision and excellent working relationships at all levels;
- the quality of the teaching observed, the majority of which was very good or better;
- the attractive and well-organised learning environment which is effectively used to promote learning and to celebrate the children's work and achievements;
- the high quality of the provision for the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning;
- the very good manners of the vast majority of the children and their positive attitudes towards learning; and
- the dedication and commitment of the Principal, the recently appointed Vice-principal and all of the staff to the well-being of the children and the future development of the school.

### 5.2 The area for improvement is the need to:

- promote further improvement in the standards by developing the use of data in order to identify emerging trends, to inform planning, to set targets, and track individual, class and whole school progress.

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by the school is good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the school's progress on the areas for improvement.

## **APPENDIX**

1. There is no Patrol Person to assist the children crossing the road.
2. The speed ramps are not effective in slowing the traffic outside the school.

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