

# Education and Training Inspectorate

## PRIMARY INSPECTION



### Alexander Dickson Primary School, Ballygowan, County Down

Controlled, co-educational DE Ref No (401-3046)

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in May 2019



The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education  
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CUSTOMER  
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EXCELLENCE



## **FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF ALEXANDER DICKSON PRIMARY SCHOOL, BALLYGOWAN, COUNTY DOWN, BT23 5TN (401-3046)**

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out a follow-up inspection of Alexander Dickson Primary School in [February 2018](#) which concluded that the school needed to address important areas for improvement. The follow-up inspection identified the following areas for improvement:

- the need to evaluate further the impact of the learning experiences; and
- the need to use the qualitative and quantitative data to supply clear evidence of improved outcomes for all of the children.

As a consequence, the Department of Education made the decision that the school remained in the Formal Intervention Process under the [Every School a Good School](#) policy on 29 March 2018.

The school's action plans were of a good quality and were adjusted appropriately in light of the feedback given by the ETI. The school's development plan was adjusted in light of the inspection findings and through the school's own self-evaluation processes.

The ETI carried out an interim follow-up visit in November 2018, and a follow-up inspection in May 2019.

In the interval since the follow-up inspection, the school has received external support provided by the Education Authority in relation to developing further the roles of the senior and middle leaders to evaluate the children's learning experiences and outcomes. The quality and impact of the support mechanisms have been very good; consequently, there have been improvements in the quality of education as reported in the key findings below.

During this period, the other actions or changes which affect the work of the school include:

- the permanent appointment of a new full-time teacher;
- the staff availing of professional development opportunities relevant to their curricular areas;
- the development of a new teaching and learning policy;
- the amendment of short-term planning to increase effectiveness in evaluations to inform future planning;
- the reconstitution of the board of governors including the appointment of a new chairperson;

- a new parental consultation group; and
- the re-evaluation of the school's vision by the parents, staff and governors, resulting in a new school mission statement written by upper key stage 2 children.

### **Key findings**

- The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and action to promote improvement are now good. The staff, led by the senior leadership team, work collegially and have effected improvement in both literacy and numeracy, specifically in providing further opportunities for extended writing across the curriculum and in promoting children's understanding of word problems. Short-term planning now includes meaningful evaluations which inform future planning. In particular, cognisance is taken of the children's voice to evaluate the impact of the learning experiences provided.
- A majority of the lessons observed, during the follow-up process, were good and a significant minority were very good. There has been a marked improvement in the outcomes for the children, evidenced clearly in the school's qualitative and quantitative information. During discussions with the inspectors, the year 6 and 7 children, were able to: talk about a wide range of genres and authors; articulate their reading preferences; and, explain their thinking when answering a range of mathematical problems.
- The governors exercise confidently their support and challenge function, particularly regarding the progress of the children. The governors are very knowledgeable about their linked areas of curricular responsibility. The school is increasingly well-connected with the community it serves including opportunities for parents to learn more about the children's learning experiences.
- The Educational Authority's support to the school has been reduced considerably and replaced by the school's own programme of self-evaluation and continuous professional development.

### **Overall effectiveness**

Alexander Dickson Primary School demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement in:

- raising further the quality of learning and teaching in the school through the use of its own self-evaluation processes to identify and disseminate best practice.

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