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*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

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Follow-up Inspection

**Alexander Dickson Primary School,
Ballygowan**

October 2009

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

The inspection in October 2006 highlighted strengths in the school's provision that included:

- the bright, stimulating learning environment;
- the caring ethos that exists within the school;
- the quality of the provision for those children requiring additional support with their learning; and
- the quality of the teaching which was always satisfactory and sometimes good.

The inspection identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- the need to disseminate the good practice that exists such as teaching strategies that encourage extended responses from the children;
- the need to promote and improve standards in all areas; and
- the need to ensure that roles and responsibilities are matched to the needs and priorities of the school.

In the interval since the inspection, the following actions which affect the work of the school have taken place:

- the Principal and special needs co-ordinator are both teaching classes;
- the reduction of classes from a seven class base to a five class base;
- an increase in the number of children taught in composite classes;
- the participation in the Raising Achievement in Numeracy programme;
- the introduction of Interactive Whiteboards in all classrooms;
- the introduction of an electronic system for tracking the progress of individual pupils;
- the introduction of Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities; and
- the recent focus on raising standards in writing.

The Education and Training Inspectorate carried out three monitoring visits prior to the follow-up inspection, which was undertaken on 15 October 2009.

The action plan produced by the school in response to the inspection findings was of a very good quality.

The School Development Plan has been adjusted in light of the inspection findings. The development plan meets the statutory requirements as set out by the Department of Education.

Very good progress has been made in the areas of improvement identified during the original inspection.

The following are the most important improvements since the original inspection:

- the improvement in standards as demonstrated by the end of key stage results and the effective analysis of standardized test scores;
- the very good progress made in applying more rigorous and consistent strategies to monitor and evaluate learning and teaching, such as, classroom observations and evaluation of planning by the teachers and Principal; and
- the incorporation of learning intentions and success criteria in the learning and teaching supported by effective questioning leading to discussion and extended responses.

Since the inspection, the school evaluated the progress made in the areas for improvement identified in the original inspection. The inspection confirms that, through effective self-evaluation, the school demonstrated clear evidence of improvement. Accordingly, the Inspectorate recommends that the processes for self-evaluation now in place are further developed.

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is now very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the learners and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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