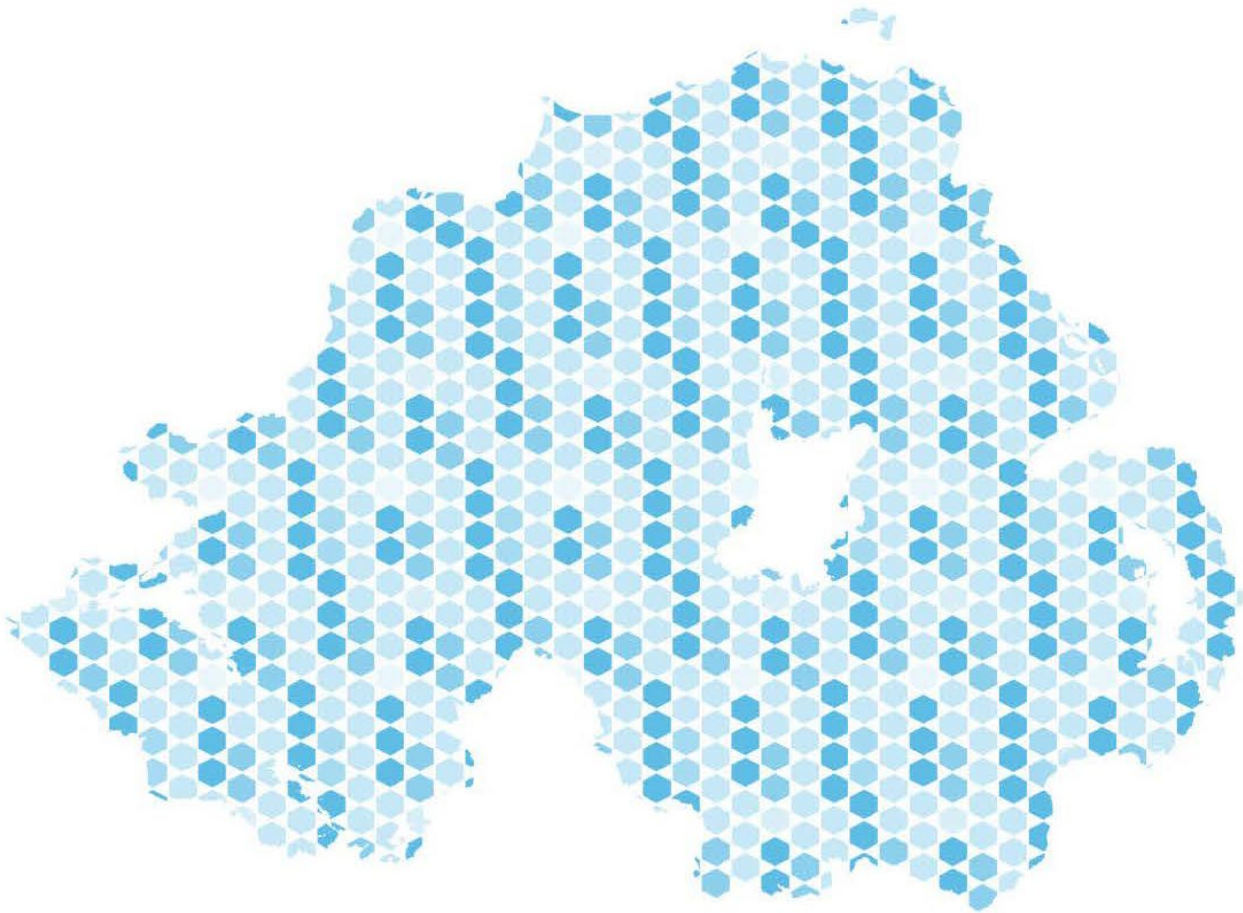


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Castlewellan Primary School,
Castlewellan, County Down

Controlled, co-educational

Report of a Follow-up Inspection
in September 2018



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

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FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF CASTLEWELLAN PRIMARY SCHOOL, COUNTY DOWN, BT31 9EG (401-1599)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out an inspection of Castlewellan Primary School in [October 2016](#), which concluded that the school needed to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners.

The areas for improvement were to:

- develop further the planning across all areas of the curriculum to better meet the learning needs of all of the children and improve the standards they attain;
- improve the quality of the provision for the children of reception age;
- review the distribution of roles and responsibilities at senior and middle leadership level as a matter of urgency to effect improvement in, and to provide rigorous evaluation of, the provision and attainment; and
- strengthen the governance of the school.

As a consequence, the Department of Education (DE) entered the school into the Formal Intervention Process under the [Every School a Good School](#) policy on 20 December 2016.

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.

The ETI carried out an interim follow-up visit in November 2017 and a follow-up inspection on 25 and 26 September 2018.

In the interval since the initial inspection, the school has received extensive external support provided by the Education Authority (EA), in relation to: leadership and management, governance and literacy and numeracy. Consequently, there have been some improvements in the quality of learning and teaching as reported in the key findings below.

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

- a 55% decrease in the overall enrolment which now stands at 23 children;
- the school no longer offers provision for children of reception age;

- the percentage of children requiring support with aspects of their learning has risen significantly from 33% to 87%;
- the resignation of five governors;
- five changes in teaching staff of one class during the academic year 2017-18; and
- the ongoing employment of temporary teaching staff.

Views of parents and staff

A majority of parents and all of the staff responded to the questionnaires. Most of the parents reported that they are happy with their child's experiences at the school; the written comments reflected their appreciation of the provision for those children with additional needs who are supported well by the caring staff. A few of the staff who responded to the questionnaires raised issues concerning the quality of aspects of leadership at senior leadership level, including: governance; the lack of effective communication within the school; and how information on children is analysed and shared with all relevant staff. The ETI has reported to the principal, the representative of the governors and a representative from the EA the views of the parents and staff and the main issues emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

Key findings

- The outcomes for learners remains an important area for improvement. Evidence from the children's books, targets within the children's individual education plans and the school's quantitative data shows there is considerable variation in the standards the children attain, in both literacy and numeracy, particularly at the end of key stage (KS) 1 and lower KS 2. The work in the children's books and digital portfolios shows, however, that the children: have a greater awareness of writing genres; are able to articulate more clearly their reading preferences; and, employ a wider range of reading and mental mathematics strategies.
- The quality of provision remains an important area for improvement. While the long- and medium-term planning for progression in literacy and numeracy has been developed through effective support from the EA, a significant minority of the teachers' evaluations lack rigour and are not used effectively to inform the learning and teaching. Targets within the individual education plans are not specific enough and do not demonstrate sufficiently the children's progress. The use of the school's quantitative and qualitative data to monitor and evaluate accurately progression in learning across the key stages is underdeveloped. The quality of learning and teaching has, however, improved; most of the lessons observed throughout the follow-up process were good. The teachers now use a wider range of classroom strategies in play-based learning, literacy and numeracy lessons to motivate and engage the learners.

- The quality and effectiveness of leadership, management and action to promote improvement now requires significant improvement. The shortage of governors and absence of a quorum is impeding progress at all levels. There remains an urgent need for governors to: promote effective working relationships within the school at all levels; and, ratify the school development plan.
- Whilst the roles and responsibilities have been reviewed and there is an appropriate structure for monitoring the quality of provision in literacy and numeracy, co-ordination of these areas remains at an early stage of development. Additional staff development is required to support and build the capacity of co-ordinators.
- On the basis of the evidence available, the arrangements for safeguarding children continue to reflect broadly the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The school needs to: access training for the recently appointed deputy designated teacher; and, update the safeguarding policies to reflect the recent changes in the safeguarding team. In discussions with the inspectors, the children in years 4 to 7 reported that they felt safe in school and knew what to do if they had any concerns about their well-being.
- It continues to be important that the employing authority, governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school in order to address the current and future needs of the children and staff.
- Owing to the shortage of governors, lack of progress in addressing sufficiently the areas for improvement from the last inspection, and the quality of leadership and management of the school, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be limited confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. Castlewellan Primary School is failing to provide its children with an acceptable standard of education due, in part, to the management of the school by the board of governors. Given the complexity of the school's context and in order to assist the governors to address the issues outlined in this report, the ETI recommends that DE exercises its power under Article 14 of the Education (NI) Order, 1998, to appoint additional voting members, with appropriate experience and expertise, to the governing body.

Overall effectiveness

Castlewellan Primary School needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. It requires external support to do so. The follow-up inspection has identified the following areas for improvement:

- to improve the quality of leadership and management, including strengthening the governance, of the school;
- for the principal and staff, supported by the governors, to establish and maintain effective professional working relationships and improve internal communication at all levels in the best interests of the children;
- to demonstrate appropriate progression for all of the children; and
- to raise standards in literacy and numeracy for all children.

Further action will be considered by DE.

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