

EDUCATION AND TRAINING
INSPECTORATE

PRIMARY INSPECTION

Parkhall Primary School, Antrim

DE Ref No 301-6058

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in June 2024



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Follow-up to the inspection of Parkhall Primary School, Antrim, BT41 1AZ (301-6058)

Introduction

Parkhall Primary School is a co-educational controlled primary school situated in a large well-maintained site within the Steeple area of the town of Antrim. Over the past four years, the enrolment in the school has risen steadily from 169 in 2020 to the current total of 199 children, of which 58% (115) have free school meals entitlement. The school has 29 newcomer children from eleven different countries. Around one-quarter of the children have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN).

There are two classes for children with moderate learning difficulties, one each in key stage (KS) 1 and KS 2, and one Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools (SPiMS) class for nursery/foundation stage children with severe learning difficulties (SLD) and additional needs. Two further SPiMS classes for year 1 children with SLD and additional needs are planned for opening in September 2024.

Since 2022, five new teachers and two co-ordinators have been appointed. Over the past year, four learning support assistants have taken up post to support the learning of the children who have SEN.

The school building has undergone substantial refurbishment, including the creation of a sensory room and the specialist provision rooms. Classrooms have been reconfigured and rearranged to meet better the needs of the children and enhance further the provision for learning and teaching. Furthermore, additional outdoor play areas, including provision of a polytunnel, have been established to enhance the children's outdoor learning opportunities.

This follow-up inspection was carried out in June 2024 and provided the school with the opportunity to demonstrate its progress in addressing the areas for action from the time of the last inspection in June 2023.

Views of parents, staff and pupils

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) issued confidential online questionnaires to year seven children, parents and staff in advance of the follow-up inspection. A summary of the responses was communicated to the principal and chair of governors.

A total of 38 parents (27%) responded to the online questionnaire. Almost all of the parents indicated that: their child is happy in school and is making appropriate progress; they were content with their child's learning experiences; the staff supported their child's learning; and that they received helpful information about their child's progress. Nearly all of the parents who responded to the online questionnaire would recommend Parkhall Primary School to other parents and carers. Twelve of the parents supplemented their questionnaire responses with written comments which were mainly positive.

Over one-third (12) of the teaching, classroom assistant and school support staff responded to a confidential online questionnaire. The responses indicate that: almost all of the staff are clear about the school vision for its pupils; and most of the staff feel that they contribute and are involved in meeting the school vision for children's learning. The responses also indicated high levels of staff satisfaction about how: their views were sought and acted upon; they have benefitted from opportunities for professional learning and ongoing training; and they feel they have contributed to the school achieving its vision.

While the school shared the questionnaire with the year 7 children, no responses were received. Inspectors did, however, meet with groups of children from KS 1 and KS 2. In the discussions, the children spoke enthusiastically about how they are rewarded for their learning. They know when they are making progress through, for example: their teacher awarding merit points; the teachers helpful feedback in their books; and by advisory phone calls to their parents. The children also brought along and talked about pieces of work that they were particularly proud of and how they were involved in setting themselves targets to make progress in their learning. All of the children indicated that they knew who they could talk to if they had any concerns about their safety or wellbeing.

Key actions

During this period, the key actions which affect the work of the school are set out below.

- The school has received specific external support provided by the Education Authority (EA) in relation to: the development of play-based learning (PBL); the role of the co-ordinator; leading literacy and numeracy; whole-school action planning; and strategies for monitoring and evaluating.
- Middle leaders have developed further their links and networking opportunities with colleagues, including a local cluster of schools in observing practice in other settings and sharing the most effective practice in areas of learning including numeracy, literacy, the world around us and in play-based learning.
- A revised approach to the planning for and evaluation of learning and teaching has been developed.
- The teachers and classroom assistants have engaged in professional learning opportunities provided through internal staff dissemination and in conjunction with the EA in areas related to the needs of the children in their care.

Key findings

- Across the school all of the lessons observed were effective in progressing the children's learning. The teachers ensure the active engagement of the children in their learning through the provision of a range of tasks and opportunities which meet well each child's specific learning needs.

- There is a welcoming inclusive environment across the school, including in the specialist provisions, and the newcomer children are well integrated and included in the life of the school.
- The detailed planning guides well the work of the staff, identifying clear learning opportunities to develop and support the individual needs of the children. For example, in the best practice in play-based learning, the planning guides the active engagement of the adults in the implementation of strategies to support and enhance learning through play which is impacting positively on the children's engagement and attainment.
- In the classes within the SPiMS, staff understand the children's individual needs. The teachers' planning is individualised and tailored to meet the complex needs of the children; they skilfully adapt planned learning opportunities in a sensitive and responsive manner. Furthermore, they adopt effective approaches to allow the children to manage their emotions and use well the established daily routines to settle the children in readiness for learning. Most of the children in the specialist classes manage well during the opportunities to integrate with their mainstream peers, including at break and lunch times.
- The curriculum co-ordinators have developed well their understanding of their roles in monitoring and evaluating the quality of the provision and are more confident and assured in leading their areas of responsibility. They use examples of the children's work, quantitative progress data and teachers' professional judgement to assess the effectiveness and suitability of the planning to review and refine the content. Through the teachers' feedback in evaluations of learning, they know how the planning can be improved further and have identified, appropriately, the need to obtain a greater bank of first-hand evidence of the quality of the provision for learning and the impact of any changes made on the children's achievements.
- The co-ordination, resources and arrangements for children's PBL experiences have developed well. Resources for outdoor play have been acquired and are used well to engage the children in their learning. The active participation of the classroom assistants in PBL promotes and supports well the children's development. In the most effective practice, the children are encouraged to apply their knowledge across other areas of learning to their PBL experiences. The approach to the evaluation of planning, learning and teaching in PBL is systematic and the teachers make good use of their evaluations of the learning and teaching, along with those of the classroom assistants, to reflect on the children's progression in learning and inform their future planning. The provision for PBL is effective. Further opportunities should be provided to embed the practices and share the most effective practice within the school to ensure consistency in the quality of learning experiences for all of the children.

Child Protection

At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the school demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance.

Going Forward

Parkhall Primary School is, in line with its vision, helping children to “*learn to work independently and with others*” within a climate of respect and a focus on learning, “*to develop children’s talents*”.


The staff have addressed the areas for action left at the time of the last inspection and have identified appropriate areas to take forward in developing further the provision for learning to realise fully their vision.

ETI, through engagement of the district inspector, will work with the school as it addresses the areas for consideration detailed in this report. No further follow-up inspection is required.

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