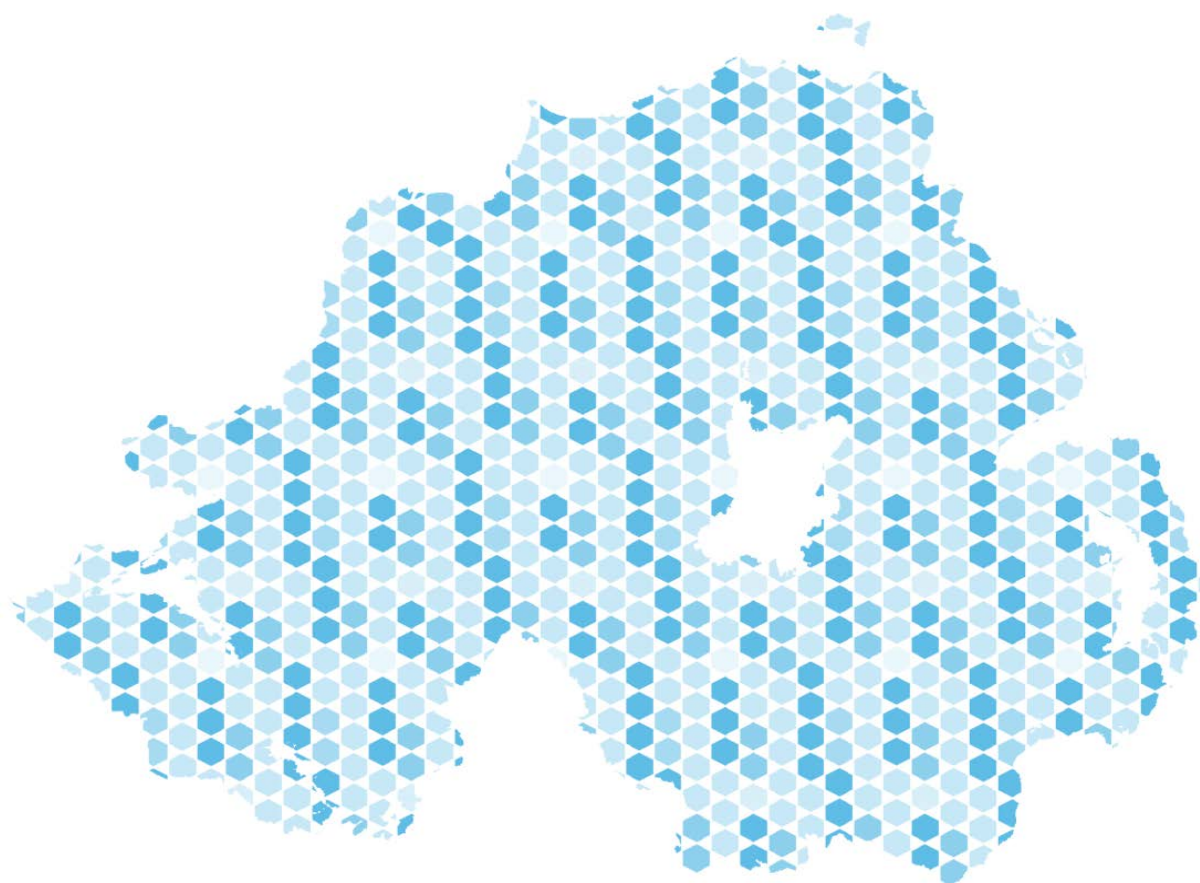


PRIMARY INSPECTION 2015-16



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Ballykeel Primary School,
and Nursery Unit, Ballymena,
County Antrim

Report of an Inspection in
September 2015



*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



Quantitative terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

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% |

Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels when reporting on Achievement and standards, on Provision for learning and on Leadership and management:

| |
|-----------------------------------|
| Outstanding |
| Very good |
| Good |
| Important area(s) for improvement |
| Requires significant improvement |
| Requires urgent improvement |

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the school:

| |
|--|
| The school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement. |
| The school demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement. |
| The school needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection. |
| The organisation 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 ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection. |

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1. Inspection method and evidence base

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of primary schools, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self-evaluation* at: <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-primary.htm>.

Inspectors observed teaching and learning, scrutinised documentation and the children's written work and held formal and informal discussions with children, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with a representative(s) from the governors;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Twelve percent of parents and 75% of staff (teaching and non-teaching) responded to the questionnaires. The responses to the parental questionnaires indicated very high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted the positive caring environment, the strong sense of community and the excellent work of the principal and the staff. Most of the staff completed questionnaires and their responses were almost all positive; they emphasised the child-centred ethos, the excellent team spirit and the effective leadership of the principal. The ETI has reported to the principal and a representative of the board of governors the very small number of issues emerging from the questionnaires.

2. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interest of all children, the purpose of inspection is, through effective linking of internal and external approaches, to evaluate the:

- children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy; including how the school is addressing low attainment and underachievement where applicable;
- quality of provision for learning in the school including the nursery unit; and
- quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

Ballykeel Primary School is a controlled primary school situated in a residential area on the outskirts of Ballymena. Half of the children come from the neighbouring area with the other half coming from the wider Ballymena area. The enrolment has been increasing steadily over the past five years from 292 to 378 with an additional 52 children enrolled in the nursery unit, and the school operates at 95% capacity. The school lives out its motto 'educate, enrich, inspire,' as confirmed by the questionnaire returns and the inspection findings. The percentage of children entitled to free school meals has fluctuated between 50% and 60% in the past four years and is currently 55%, while the proportion of children requiring additional support with aspects of their learning has remained around 25%.

The school prides itself on its extensive and well-established arrangements for Shared Education.

| Ballykeel Primary School | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Enrolment | 319 | 341 | 350 | 378 |
| % School attendance | 95.1 | 95.6 | 95.3 | 97.0 |
| % NI Primary school average | 94.9 | 95.6 | - | - |
| FSME Percentage ¹ | 53.1 | 51.7 | 56.7 | 55.0 |
| No. of children on SEN register | 69 | 78 | 76 | 86 |
| % of children on SEN register | 21.7 | 22.9 | 21.8 | 22.8 |
| No. of children with statements of educational need | 8 | 8 | 12 | 13 |
| No. of newcomer children | 0 | * | 5 | * |

Source: data as held by the school N/A = not available

* fewer than 5

4. Overall findings of the inspection

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Overall effectiveness | High level of capacity for sustained improvement |
| Achievements and standards | Outstanding |
| Provision for learning | Very good |
| Leadership and management | Outstanding |
| Nursery Unit | Very good |

5. Achievements and standards

- The children are very motivated and settle quickly to their learning; they show great respect for their peers, their teachers and other adults. They respond positively to the expectations of their teachers and aspire to achieve the highest standards possible in all aspects of school life.
- The school's performance data shows that almost all of the children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make outstanding progress in English and mathematics in line with their ability and above expectation.
- Across the school, the children complete their calculations in mathematics with very good levels of accuracy. By year 7, the most able children demonstrate very good knowledge and understanding of key concepts across the mathematics curriculum and show a high degree of flexibility in applying mental mathematics strategies to solve problems and complete investigations.
- The children work confidently on their own, in pairs and in groups and engage well in discussions. They use their talking, listening and thinking skills to improve their learning and written work. By year 7, the children attain outstanding standards in English: in particular, the children read with enjoyment and understanding and use an effective blend of strategies to understand more deeply a varied range of texts. The children's handwriting and the presentation of their written work are of a consistently high quality across the key stages.

¹ The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

- The children in the nursery unit enjoy a wide range of interesting activities; they engage effectively in play and almost all are well settled into the new school year. They are acquiring good personal and social skills. The children are secure in their routines and develop effectively their early mathematical concepts. They produce model making of a good standard for this time of the school year.
- The teachers and the children use information and communication technology (ICT) very effectively to support and extend the children's learning across the curriculum. By the end of year 7 the children achieve very good standards.

6. Provision for learning

- The quality of almost all of the lessons observed was good or better with 50% evaluated as very good. Where the learning was very effective; the teachers' skilful questioning and the well-targeted activities challenged the children's thinking and enabled them to connect and apply their learning to everyday life.
- Across the school, the teachers' planning is comprehensive and closely informed by their thorough evaluation of the children's previous learning and detailed knowledge of their individual needs.
- The children, who require additional help with aspects of their learning, including those in the nursery unit, are identified early and supported well through a range of individually tailored support programmes. These include: highly effective withdrawal sessions for literacy and numeracy; the involvement of a wide range of external agencies; and the provision of well-matched learning activities to support the children's varying needs. As a result of the additional support, the children meet the targets outlined in their individual education plans, grow in confidence and achieve very positive learning outcomes.
- The high quality planning for literacy and the rich literacy environment impact positively on the progression in the children's learning. The teachers integrate literacy well across the curriculum to provide meaningful and purposeful contexts for learning. The school has developed a systematic and coherent approach to the development of reading and has embedded effectively a variety of strategies to extend the children's comprehension. The children are provided with opportunities to write for a variety of purposes and audiences including a range of creative writing and the use of ICT to enhance their writing. The school has identified appropriately the need to develop further the school's programme for writing.
- In mathematics, the children access a wide range of activities with an increasing emphasis on problem-solving and investigation. Well-planned tasks, delivered through effective play-based learning, develop the younger children's mathematical knowledge and understanding. The school has placed an important focus on developing the children's mathematical language which is benefiting the development of their problem solving skills. Overall, the teachers are making very good use of practical resources and well-planned mental mathematics opportunities to develop the children's mathematical thinking, and to consolidate and extend their knowledge. Working with parents to support their children's learning in mathematics is an important and effective feature of the provision.

- ICT is used very well to afford opportunities for the children to assess their own and their peers' learning and to use multi-media software to develop and embed language concepts.
- There are very good learning opportunities in all aspects of the pre-school curriculum; in particular, the development of the children's personal, social and emotional well-being, mathematical understanding and early scientific concepts. The quality of the staff's interactions is consistently good with many examples of very good discussions with the children that extend their thinking skills. The planning and assessment methods are appropriate and, increasingly, the staff identify actions for specific children that meet their learning needs.
- Pastoral care in the school and the nursery unit is outstanding. All of the staff are highly committed to the care and well-being of each child; they work together as a team to create a happy, collegiate and supportive environment in which to develop the children's full potential. Throughout the school, innovative displays are used to celebrate the children's work and inspire learning. The children demonstrate care for one another and a deep sense of pride in their school and community and have experienced much success in competitions at local and regional level. There is evidence that these activities develop well the children's confidence, sense of inter-dependence and self-esteem.
- The school gives outstanding attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, thereby encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The principal, vice-principal and the senior leadership team provide outstanding strategic leadership which focuses sharply on achieving the highest possible standards in learning and pastoral care. The co-ordinators, including the teacher in charge of the nursery unit, are knowledgeable and skilled in leading change and monitoring and evaluating the impact on provision and standards within and across their areas of responsibility.
- The continuous improvement cycle of monitoring, evaluating and reviewing is well embedded at class teacher, co-ordinator, senior leadership and governor levels. These processes make rigorous and systematic use of a wide range of qualitative and quantitative data to: identify areas for development; baseline current position; set realistically high targets; measure progress; and evaluate the impact of the school's actions for improvement.
- The school has very strong, effective links with the parents and the wider community which enrich and extend the children's learning experiences. A particular strength is the close partnership with a network of external agencies; this enables the school to extend care and support to the whole family which impacts positively on the children's learning. The teachers value the parents as partners in developing their children's learning and arrange workshops to inform them about school life as well as engage them in the whole school drive to raise aspirations. The well-established collaborative links with their shared education partner supports very effectively the children's learning, while the teachers benefit from the sharing of expertise and professional development opportunities.

- Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, ETI's evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence in the governance of the school.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. In discussions with the inspectors, the children in year 6 reported that they are happy and secure in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their well-being.

8. Overall effectiveness

The school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.

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