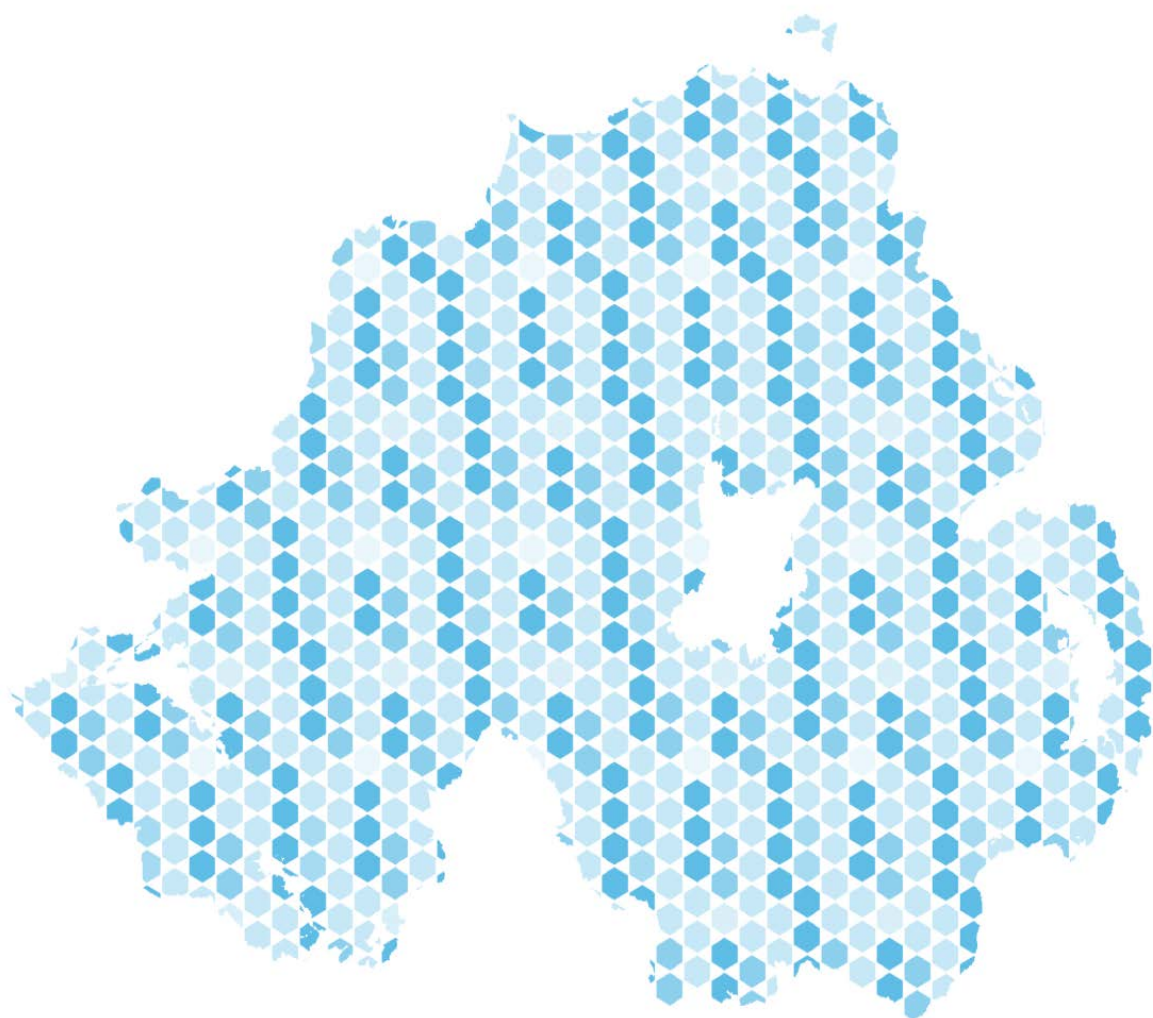


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Victoria Primary School,
Ballyhalbert

Report of an Inspection
in November 2012



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Inspection methods and evidence base

The inspection evaluations are based on evidence gained from lesson observations, from scrutiny of the children's completed written work and from a range of documentation including the school's internal performance data. In addition, the inspection team held discussions with groups of the children, with teaching and non-teaching staff and with representatives from the Board of Governors.

The views of the parents, teaching and non-teaching staff were sought through a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. The reporting inspector discussed any issues raised through the questionnaires with the principal and the governors. A summary of the outcomes from the questionnaires is included in section 6 of the report.

Quantitative terms

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%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

1. School context

Victoria Primary School is situated in the village of Ballyhalbert on the Ards Peninsula, County Down. The enrolment has increased slightly over the past four years from 134 in 2008 to the current enrolment of 142. A new Principal was appointed in June 2011.

At the time of the inspection 31% of the children were entitled to free school meals and 30% of the children were identified as requiring help with aspects of their learning.

2. Focus of inspection and overall finding

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy, in particular, how the school is addressing low attainment and under-achievement where applicable;
- the quality of provision for learning; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

In addition, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning, and the school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection, were evaluated.

OVERALL FINDING OF THE INSPECTION

In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this school is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in leadership and management, standards and learning and teaching which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively.

Summary of key findings

Achievements and standards Quality of provision Leadership and management	Satisfactory Satisfactory Satisfactory
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KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

3. Achievements and Standards

The quality of the children's achievements and standards is satisfactory.

- Most of the children are enthusiastic and well-motivated to learn; they settle quickly to their work, have good self-management skills and engage purposefully in their learning.

- An analysis of the end of key stage (KS) 2 assessment data over the past four years shows that the school's performance in English and mathematics has been below the Northern Ireland (NI) average; for all four years in English and in three of the four years in mathematics. Compared to schools in the same free school meals category, the levels of attainment in English have been below the NI average over the four years and have been below the NI average for three of the four years in mathematics.
- A majority of the children attain satisfactory or better standards in literacy. Most of the children read fluently and with expression; they are interested in and enjoy their reading. By the end of KS2 a majority of the children are reading and writing at a satisfactory level but a significant minority of children could achieve higher standards.
- The children attain satisfactory standards in numeracy. By year 7 the majority of the children can use mental mathematics strategies confidently and are flexible in their mathematical thinking. When given the opportunity to do so, they are able to work together collaboratively in pairs and small groups, expressing their own ideas confidently and showing respect for the opinions of others.
- The children in the school who have been identified with special educational needs make steady improvement in their learning. Those children provided with additional withdrawal support in literacy and numeracy make good progress in their learning.
- The school participates in the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) KS2 ICT Accreditation scheme. Throughout the school, the children attain good standards in ICT.

4. Provision for Learning

The quality of the provision for learning is satisfactory.

- During the inspection, the teaching observed ranged from inadequate to good. A significant minority was good; but the majority was satisfactory and needs to be improved.
- There is inconsistency in the quality of the adult interaction, expectations and teaching strategies. In the best examples of teaching observed, the teachers used extended questions to activate the children's thinking; they provided collaborative group activities which promoted meaningful discussion and sharing of ideas amongst the children and made productive use of the children's oral contributions. However, in much of the teaching observed, the work was overly-directed by the teacher; questioning often produced limited responses from the children and important opportunities were missed to build upon the children's ideas and extend their language and communication skills across all areas of learning. In order to bring about more consistent progress in, and better support for, the development of the children's oral communication skills, the teachers need to develop and implement an agreed set of approaches and strategies across all key stages.

- Throughout the school, the quality of the planning is satisfactory. In the past year the teachers have worked to develop whole school written planning. Overall however, the planning requires further development in order to guide the staff more effectively in their day-to-day work with the children. The quality of the learning and teaching, marking and assessment is inconsistent within and across key stages.
- In the Foundation Stage (FS) and Key Stage (KS) 1, the children acquire good mathematical knowledge and language through the appropriate use of games, stories and practical activities; in KS2, they have satisfactory opportunities to consolidate and extend their knowledge, particularly in number work. To improve the children's understanding and flexibility in mathematical thinking, particularly at KS2, the teachers need to integrate processes more fully into the day-to-day teaching of mathematics and to set the learning within meaningful contexts for the children. There is also a need for a more coherent approach to the development of the children's ability to investigate and solve problems and the wider application of their mental mathematics skills leading to greater progression and challenge, particularly for the more able children.
- In literacy, in the FS and KS1, the children acquire the basic skills of reading through a structured phonics programme and modelled, shared and guided reading activities. In order to raise further the children's standards and attainments in reading, the teachers need to focus the planned reading activities more specifically on extending and deepening the children's understanding of what they read and of how language is used for a range of purposes and audiences.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school is satisfactory. The children participate in a good range of extra-curricular activities and have the opportunity to take on roles of responsibility, for example, through the school council and the 'Playground Buddies' scheme. The behaviour and attitude of the children is of a very high standard.
- The quality of the provision for special educational needs is satisfactory. The children who have been identified as requiring support with aspects of their learning receive regular additional in-class support and withdrawal sessions in literacy and numeracy. The school's own data indicates that many of the children make good progress in their learning. There is a need to ensure that the individual education plans reflect accurately the needs of the children; contain realistic targets that are measurable and achievable and that these targets are matched with appropriately focused strategies to support and extend the children's learning. Stronger links need to be developed with the preschool settings from which the children transfer in order to make better use of all the available information to guide the future planning for the children's needs.
- The school gives satisfactory attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. The children's involvement in environmental activities through the Eco club and range of after school sports available encourages the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

5. Leadership and Management

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory.

- The Principal has worked very hard to develop positive working relationships and communication with the parents and the wider community. Significant areas for improvement have been identified; as this essential work is developed further it will be important that all of the co-ordinators become more pro-active in leading, supporting and guiding improvements within their curricular areas. There is a need to develop more regular and systematic strategies to monitor and evaluate the quality of provision.
- The processes for self-evaluation to promote improvement in the quality of learning and teaching, including the analysis and use of the school's performance data, are at an early stage of development. The current school development plan and associated action plans do not focus sufficiently on effecting improvement in learning and teaching or on raising the children's levels of attainment. It will be important for the governors, staff and parents to undertake a review of the school timetable in order to ensure that all time is used more effectively for learning and teaching.
- There are effective procedures in place to keep the parents informed about their children's progress together with some useful information and advice about how they might support their children's learning. In addition, the teachers provide the parents with helpful guidance about the curriculum through an information session at the beginning of the year. An active parents' association contributes to the life and work of the school. The school supports well a range of charities and the local community.
- The governors are highly supportive of all aspects of the life and work of the school. They carry out their roles conscientiously and have a good understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing 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 broadly reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

CONCLUSION

In most of the areas inspected the quality of education provided in this school is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in leadership and management, standards and learning and teaching which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively. The areas for improvement include the need;

- to review and ensure greater equity in the responsibilities of the curricular leaders, in order to prioritise and implement, in a strategic and manageable manner, the actions to bring about sustained improvement; and
- for the teachers to come to an agreed understanding of what constitutes effective learning and teaching, in order to raise further the children's attainment in literacy and numeracy.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-24 month period.

6. Summary of questionnaire responses

PARENTAL QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Issued to the school (Based on 09/10 Enrolment)	100
Number of Questionnaires Returned	35
Percentage of Returns	
Number of Comments	15

Most of the responses from the parental questionnaire indicated high levels of satisfaction with most aspects of the the provision in the school. In particular, the parents highlighted the improvements that have been brought about since the appointment of the new Principal; which have included better communication with the parents and the wider community; an increased range of after school activities and the improvements in the general day-to-day organisation within the school. In addition, they expressed their appreciation of the caring and approachable teachers and ancillary staff. The concerns raised in the written comments have been discussed with the governors and the Principal.

In discussions with the governors, they expressed their appreciation of the work of the whole staff and, in particular, the work of the new Principal in developing links with the parents and the wider community.

The inspectors also met with a group of the year 6 children. The children reported that they feel safe in school and that they are aware of what to do if they have any concerns. They also spoke positively about school life; a few of them expressed their enjoyment of being involved in the school council.

TEACHERS QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Returned	7
Number of Comments	6

SUPPORT STAFF QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Returned	6
Number of Comments	1

Seven of the teachers and six of the support staff completed the questionnaire. All of the staff who responded indicated their support for the work of the school and the developing collegiality amongst the staff.

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