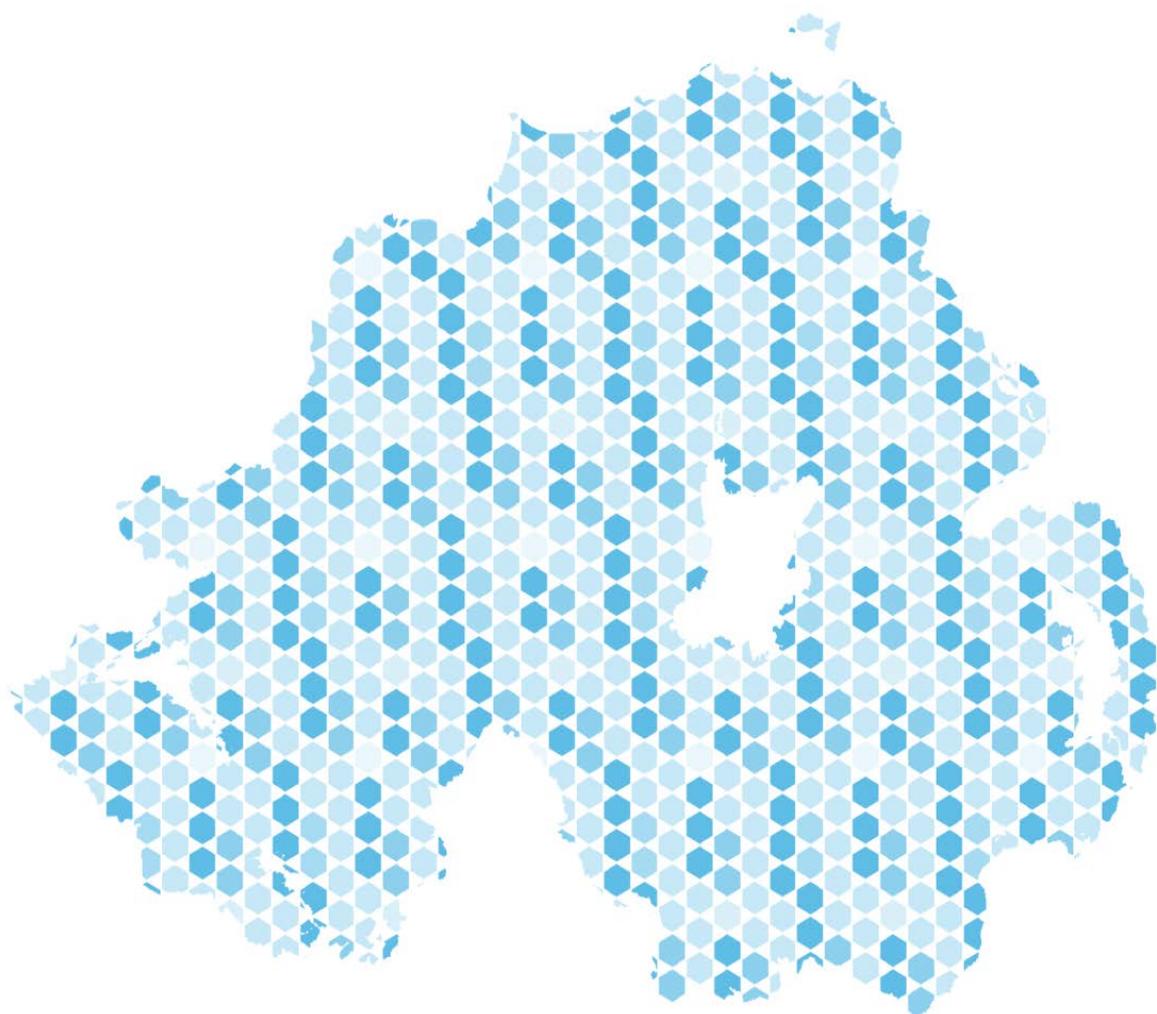


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

St John's Primary School and
Carnlough Community Nursery,
Ballymena

Report of an Inspection
in December 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

St John's Primary School is situated in the village of Carnlough. The enrolment has increased gradually in recent years and stands currently at 152. At the time of the inspection, approximately 18% of the children were entitled to free school meals and 14% of the children were identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning. The school's Nursery Unit, Carnlough Community Nursery, runs a morning and afternoon session and provides part-time provision for a total of 27 children.

At the time of the inspection, three members of the teaching staff were employed in a substitute capacity.

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 in the school and nursery unit; 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 safeguarding, were evaluated.

OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

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

Summary of key findings

Achievements and standards	Very good
Quality of provision	Very good
Leadership and management	Good
Nursery Unit	Good

KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

3. Achievements and standards

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

- The children in the school display exemplary behaviour and are very courteous to visitors. They are enthusiastic, highly motivated and engage fully in their learning. Nearly all of the children respect and care for each other and can work independently and collaboratively in groups and pairs. The children take pride in their individual achievements and in the presentation of their work; they demonstrate progression in their acquisition and development of personal and social skills, and apply effectively their thinking skills in a range of class activities.

- An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data over the past four years shows that in English, the school's performance is in line with or above the Northern Ireland (NI) average in two of the last four years. During the same four year period, the school's performance in mathematics is above the NI average in two of the last four years. When compared with schools in the same free school meals category (FSM), the levels of attainment in English are below the average in three of the last four years and are above the average in mathematics in two of the last four years; the most recent data shows an improvement in both English and mathematics. The school's internal data indicates that, by the end of KS2, most children are achieving standards in English in line with their ability or above expectation and that a majority of children are achieving standards in mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation.
- By year 7, almost all of the children achieve very good standards in literacy and good standards in numeracy. The recently introduced accelerated reading programme motivates the children and helps to develop their confidence and enjoyment in reading; the most able children read with both fluency and expression. The children use digital media effectively to develop their writing styles and presentation skills. They listen very well in class and contribute with confidence and enthusiasm to group and class discussions. Across the key stages, almost all of the children can use mental mathematics strategies confidently and demonstrate the ability to apply their mathematical knowledge accurately in both classroom and outdoor learning contexts. They have a good understanding of key concepts across the mathematics curriculum.
- A majority of the children in the school who have been identified with special educational needs (SEN) are making good progress against their individual learning targets; they are well motivated, confident and participate fully in all aspects of school life.
- The children in the nursery unit are enthusiastic and clearly enjoy their learning. They are well settled, in both the morning and afternoon sessions, and the majority of the children engage well with the adults and with one another for sustained periods of time. They show very good levels of independence and can readily access the books and play materials available to them. They are making good progress, particularly in their personal and social development, their early language and communication skills and mathematical language.
- The achievements and standards in ICT are very good. The children, through participation in external accreditation, attain very good standards in ICT. They show confidence and a high level of competence in using a range of ICT resources to support effectively their learning.

4. Provision for learning

The quality of the provision for learning is very good.

- There is a consistent and collaborative approach to planning across all of the key stages. A wide range of effective strategies, approaches and stimulating teaching resources are included which support the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum. A particular area of expertise and a feature of current curricular provision is the innovative planning for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) projects to provide additional, valuable

learning opportunities for the children, which include the development of the outdoor learning environment. There has been a recent whole-school focus on the further development of learning and teaching throughout the school. During the inspection, the quality of the teaching observed ranged from outstanding to satisfactory with a majority being very good or outstanding. In the most effective practice, the teachers take account of the children's prior learning; use questioning effectively to encourage extended responses; promote enjoyment of learning through suitably differentiated activities; nurture within the children a sense of enquiry and are creative in connecting the children's learning across the curriculum. It is important, in a minority of the classes, that the teachers plan more appropriately challenging extension activities that are suitably matched to the needs of the more able children.

- A key strength of the school's provision for literacy is the effective use teachers make of ICT resources to motivate and engage the children in an appropriate range of literacy activities. The well-planned play-based learning sessions provide the children with valuable opportunities to use and develop their language and literacy skills. There is ongoing assessment of the children's progress in literacy throughout the school; the staff have identified the need to refine the current strategies and to use this information more effectively to target future areas for development in literacy.
- In mathematics, there is a recently reviewed and appropriately developed whole-school programme which covers all of the key aspects of numeracy and indicates suitable progression across all key stages. There are well-planned opportunities that allow the youngest children to make extensive use of practical resources to establish mathematical concepts and to develop an appropriate understanding of number, measures, and shape and space. Appropriate strategies to promote improvement in numeracy have been identified to develop further the support provided for those children who are underachieving in this key curricular area.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school and in the nursery unit is very good. This is evidenced, for example, through: the supportive and nurturing ethos; the quality of working relationships; the well-considered procedures in place to encourage and reward the children's positive behaviour; the well-established and extensive inter-agency links; and the opportunities available through the school council and eco-club for the children to express ideas for improvements and developments within the school.
- The quality of the provision for special educational needs is very good. An effective system has been established for the early identification of pupils who require additional help with aspects of their learning. Assessment information is used effectively to inform learning and teaching and to guide classroom practice. An innovative physical skills programme has been tailored to meet the needs of a small cohort of children who require extra support with co-ordination, balance and motor skills.
- The nursery unit provides good opportunities for learning in all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The daily timetable is well organised and provides an appropriate balance of free play and activities organised by the staff. The staff are skilful in promoting settled, purposeful play and in developing strategies to promote the children's language development and their communication and social skills. They have made a good start in developing a systematic approach

to planning, to observing the children at play and to recording their responses. The staff now need to develop further these methods to ensure that there is sufficient challenge and progression in all areas of the pre-school curriculum; a closer match to the children's individual needs; and sufficient evidence to provide an accurate account of the children's progress and development.

- The school and nursery unit give very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity through the availability of quality healthy snacks and an extensive extra-curricular programme which makes effective use of the local coastal environment.

5. Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management is good.

- The school has undergone a substantial period of transition in relation to staffing. The recently appointed senior leadership team demonstrates a strong and collegial commitment to the well-being of the children and to developing the school within the wider community. A culture of self-evaluation and associated action to promote improvement has been initiated throughout the school. An important aspect of this development is the robust system which is in place for the collation and tracking of performance data. The school has identified appropriately the need to now refine and develop this process to meet the needs of all the children and to address underachievement. A range of action plans and a systematic monitoring programme, which includes the Principal's and co-ordinator's scrutiny of the planning, are suitably in place to support school development planning priorities. It will be important to review the action plans to ensure consistency and that all include measurable targets which focus more precisely on learning, teaching and improvement.
- The school and the nursery unit have strong cohesive links with the parents and the local community. The parents are encouraged to be involved in the life and work of the school through for example, the Parent and Friends' group, fundraising events, regular newsletters and attendance at school functions. There are effective pastoral and curricular links between the school and the nursery unit, and also between the school and the local post-primary school, to promote a smooth transition for the children at each stage of their education.
- The governors play an important strategic role in all aspects of the life and work of the school. They are fully informed of the current challenges and priorities for future development. As governors they are committed to the school and work collaboratively to provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge.
- 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.

CONCLUSION

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

6. Summary of questionnaire responses

PARENTAL QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of questionnaires issued to the school	126
Number of Questionnaires Returned	21
Percentage of Returns	16.6%
Number of Comments	11
Nursery Unit	
Number of questionnaires issued	36
Number of Questionnaires Returned	13
Percentage of Returns	36%
Number of Comments	9

Most of the parents, through the questionnaires, expressed high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school and the nursery unit. In the written comments, the parents expressed their appreciation of the caring commitment and dedication of the staff and of the quality of the recent information evening which addressed internet safety issues. The few issues raised in the parental questionnaires were discussed with the Principal and the governors.

In discussions with the children from Year 6 they reported that they feel safe and secure in school and are aware of what to do if they have concerns about their safety or well-being. They talked politely and enthusiastically about their experiences in school and spoke with confidence about the interesting school trips, playground activities and about their role in the school council.

In discussion with the governors, they expressed their appreciation of the hardworking and dedicated staff and their strong support for the Principal.

TEACHERS QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Returned	8
Number of Comments	4

SUPPORT STAFF QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Returned	13
Number of Comments	5

All of the staff indicated that they are very happy in their work in the school.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- The school is situated on the main road into the village. In the playground area to the front and side of the school the height of the wall is inadequate.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON CARNLOUGH COMMUNITY NURSERY, BALLYMENA

1. Details of Children

Number of children:	Class 1	Class 2
Attending full-time	0	0
Attending part-time	16	11
Under 3 years of age*	0	6
With statement of special educational needs	0	0
Without a statement but receiving therapy or support from other professionals for special educational needs	0	0
At CoP stages 3 or 4**	0	4
At CoP stages 1 or 2**	0	0
With English as an additional language	0	0

* On 1 July.

** The stages refer to those set out in the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.

Percentage qualifying under DE admission criteria 1 or 2.	100%
Average attendance for the previous year.	89.4%

2. Duration of Sessions

Full-time	Part-time: am	Part-time: pm
-	2½ hours	2½ hours

3. Details of Staff

Number of:	Full-Time	Part-Time
Teachers	1	0
Nursery Assistants (qualified)	0	0
Nursery Assistants (non-qualified)	1	0

Number of: ***	
Students	2
Trainees	0

*** Total placements since September of current year

4. Parental Questionnaires

Number issued	27
Percentage returned	48.2%
Number of written comments	9

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