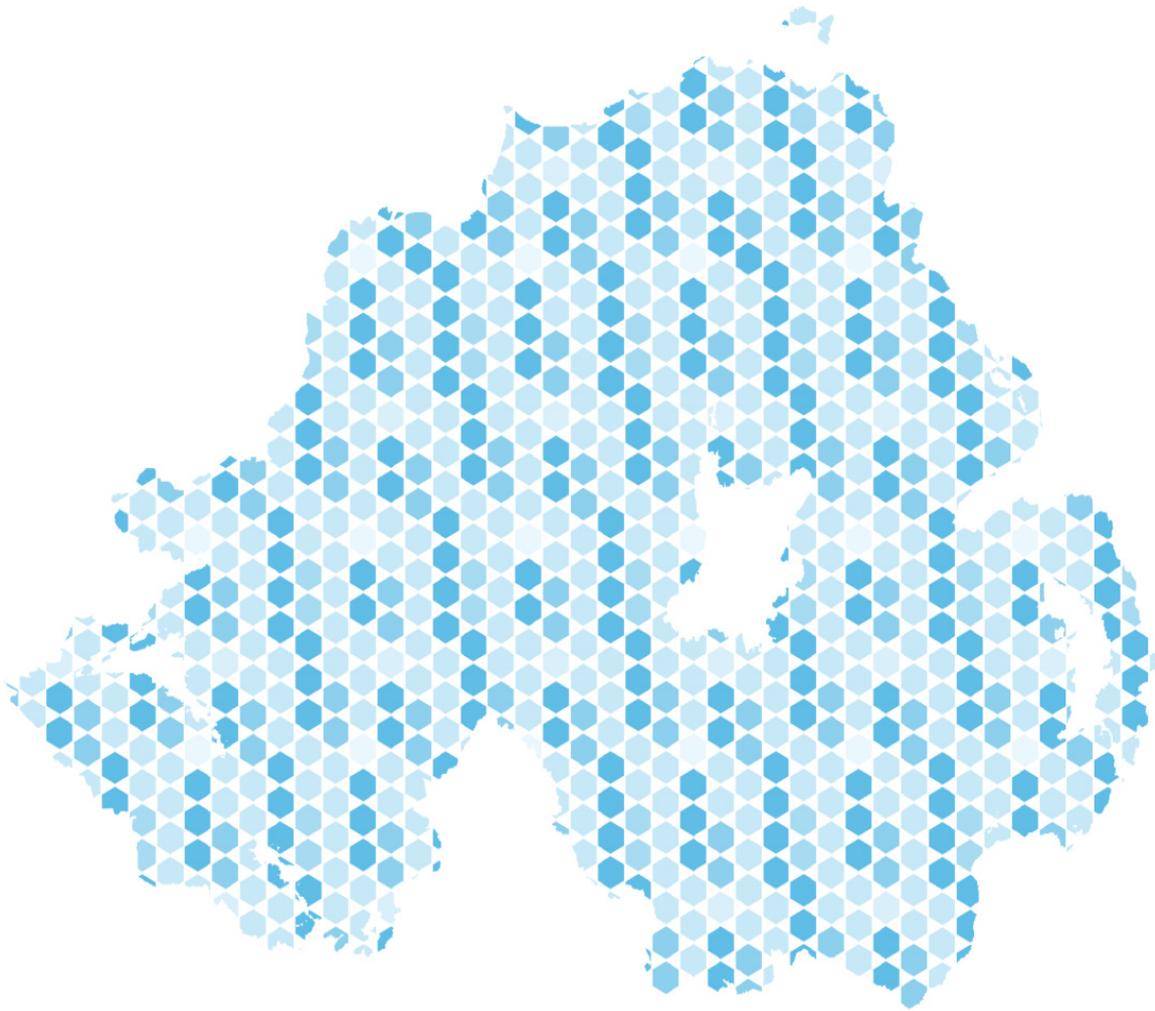


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Lead Hill Primary School,
Belfast

Report of an Inspection
in December 2011



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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

BASIC INFORMATION SHEET (BIS) - PRIMARY SCHOOLS

- A. i. **School: Lead Hill Primary** iii. **Date of Inspection: W/B 05/12/11**
 ii. **School Reference Number: 401-3043** iv. **Nature of Inspection: Focused**

B.

School Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Year 1 Intake	20	9	13	11	20
Enrolments					
Primary	143	125	116	107	112
Reception	0	0	0	0	0
Nursery Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Special Unit	0	0	0	0	0
Irish Medium Unit	0	0	0	0	0

The enrolment for the current year is the figure on the day of notification of inspection. For previous years it is the figure in the annual return to the Department of Education.

The calculations at C and D should be based on the total of the primary and reception enrolments only.

- C. Average Attendance for the Previous School Year (expressed as a percentage): 95.4% **NI Avg Att: 94.7%**
- Average Attendance for those children on the Special Educational Needs Register: 95.4%
- | | Primary & Reception | Nursery Unit | Special Unit | Irish Medium Unit |
|--|--------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
|--|--------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
- D. i. Number of Teachers (including the principal and part-time teachers): 7 0 0 0
 (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)
- ii. PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio): 18.54 NI PTR: 20.2
- iii. Average Class Size: 22
- iv. Class Size (Range): 17 to 24
- v. Ancillary Support:
 Number of Hours **Per Week**:
- | | |
|---|-------|
| i. Clerical support: | 30 |
| ii. Foundation Stage Classroom Assistant Support: | 10 |
| iii. Additional hours of other classroom assistant support: | 81.25 |
- vi. Percentage of children with statements of special educational needs: 4.46%
- vii. Total percentage of children on the Special Needs Register: 14.28%
- viii. Number of children who are **not** of statutory school age: 0
- ix. Percentage of children entitled to free school meals: 18.75%
- x. Percentage of children at the end of Key Stage 2 for 2010/11 who attained level 4 and above in English and mathematics, and Irish (in Irish-medium schools):
- | | | |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------|
| English | Mathematics | Irish |
| 100% | 94.74% | N/A |

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCHOOL CONTEXT

Lead Hill Primary School is located on an elevated site between the Upper Knockbreda Dual Carriageway and Ballygowan Road. The majority of the children come from the surrounding area. The enrolment of the school has fluctuated over the past three years and currently stands at 112 children. The school reports that approximately 19% of the children are entitled to free school meals. The school has identified approximately 14% of the children who require additional support with aspects of their learning.

1.2 FOCUS

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy;
- 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.

1.3 THE VIEWS OF THE PARENTS, TEACHERS, GOVERNORS, SUPPORT STAFF AND CHILDREN

The arrangements for the inspection included the opportunity for the parents, and the teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meetings with representatives from the Board of Governors (governors) and the children from year 6.

Seventy-five questionnaires were issued to the parents; approximately 49% were returned to the Inspection Services Branch and 20 contained additional written comments. All of the comments were highly positive and included appreciation of the leadership of the Principal and the professionalism and approachability of the teaching and support staff; attention was also drawn to the caring, family-orientated ethos of the school.

All of the teaching staff responded to the online questionnaires and supplied written comments praising the team spirit in the school and the capacity-building opportunities provided for staff by the Principal. Nine support staff responded to the online questionnaire and six supplied additional comments all of which were very positive about the life and work of the school, commenting on the children's involvement in the school council and the buddy system.

The governors spoke very positively about many aspects of the life and work of the school including their appreciation of the leadership and management skills of the Principal and the hard work and commitment of the staff.

The year 6 children talked positively about the interesting and enjoyable learning opportunities in their lessons, the work of the school council, the buddy scheme and the celebration of their achievements through the award for the Lead Hill Leaders. They indicated that they feel happy and safe in the school and they are fully aware of what to do if they have any concerns regarding their safety or well-being.

An analysis of the questionnaires and the written comments was shared with the Principal and the governors.

1.4 PASTORAL CARE

The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is very good. A family ethos pervades the school. The staff is dedicated in their care and support of the children and there are positive working relationships at all levels. The teachers motivate the children well through the very good use of praise and encouragement and the reward system. The children have very good opportunities to participate in decisions about the life and work of the school.

The children's behaviour is exemplary; they are polite and welcoming and take pride in their school and in their achievements. They listen and respond to the views of others with respect, and support one another well in their learning.

1.5 CHILD PROTECTION

The school has very good arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect broadly the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

1.6 HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The school gives very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. The children participate in a wide range of after school sporting activities and learn about the importance of a healthy lifestyle through the well-planned connected learning units.

1.7 LINKS WITH PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The children's learning experiences are enhanced by a range of educational visits and visitors to the school; for example, the school council visited the local Council offices to gain an understanding of the conduct of council meetings. The school has effective arrangements for communicating with parents including the website, monthly newsletters and information sessions. The Parent-Teacher Association gives very good support to school events and provides additional resources to broaden the children's learning opportunities.

2. **ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS**

2.1 LEARNING

The children are highly motivated to learn and respond enthusiastically to the creative and challenging learning opportunities provided by the teachers.

The children who receive additional support with their learning make good progress. These include children with learning difficulties in literacy and numeracy; and a small number who have special educational needs of a behavioural nature.

An analysis of the key stage (KS) 2 assessment data over the past four years shows that in English and mathematics, the school's performance is well above the Northern Ireland (NI) average. Similarly when compared with schools in the same free school meals band, the levels of attainment in English and mathematics, in the past four years, are well above the average.

2.2 ENGLISH AND LITERACY

The quality of the provision for English and literacy is very good.

The literacy co-ordinator provides very effective strategic leadership and has a clear vision for the development of this area of the school's work. Regular meetings, staff training sessions, collaborative planning and consistent monitoring and evaluation of the pupils' learning contribute to the very good standards achieved across the school in English.

Across key stages almost all of the children have excellent oral communication skills and speak confidently to peers, teachers and other adults. In many of the lessons observed, the children listened empathetically to others and gave thoughtful and extended verbal responses; technology such as voice recorders, Power Points and digital cameras enhance further their oral skills.

The majority of the children achieve very good standards in reading. The children are taught to read systematically through the use of commercial reading schemes which are enhanced by a wide range of appropriate support materials such as novels, 'big books' and reference materials. During the inspection, groups of children from years 4 and 7 read with fluency and understanding. The teachers create a literacy-rich environment in which reading is promoted positively through initiatives such as World Book Day events, timetabled silent reading time and a book club for children in P4 to 6 which further cultivates a love for reading.

The standard of written work achieved by the children is very good and is celebrated in attractive displays throughout the school. Samples of work made available in the course of the inspection included extended writing of a very high calibre. In the foundation stage (FS), the children become familiar with different forms of print and experiment with informal mark making. The children's letter formation, word-building skills and knowledge of the basic conventions such as simple sentence structure are developed through shared writing activities. Across the key stages, the children experience a wide variety of writing activities across a range of genres. ICT is used very effectively to support the children's learning; in KS2, the children were using the internet judiciously for independent research purposes and selection of information including the creation of web-pages.

2.3 MATHEMATICS AND NUMERACY

The numeracy co-ordinator leads very effectively the provision for mathematics. The teachers have developed a framework of the important developmental steps in mathematics, which the teachers now use to guide their medium-term planning. The school has effective monitoring and evaluation strategies in place to ensure that the teachers' planning provides suitable continuity and progression in the children's learning. It is appropriate that the teachers have identified continuity and progression in the children's mental mathematics strategies as an area for development.

In the FS the children experience a range of opportunities, including those arising during play-based learning sessions, to consolidate and extend their mathematical language and understanding. The children develop an understanding of number through appropriate sorting, matching and counting activities. This early mathematical development is built upon effectively in KS1 and KS2, with the children's knowledge, understanding and skills being extended through a broad and balanced approach to the mathematics curriculum. The teachers make excellent use of the connected learning topics to give the children opportunities to use and apply their mathematics.

A significant strength of the provision is the teachers' high expectations for the children's aptitude to solve problems, explore open-ended investigations and explain their reasoning, both orally and in writing. During the inspection, the children collaborated well in groups and pairs to solve problems involving number, shape and space, and measures. The teachers used ICT effectively, particularly the use of programmable devices.

During the inspection, the children in year 7 demonstrated excellent knowledge and understanding of number facts, place value, 3-D shapes, estimation and measures. They also showed flexibility in their mathematical thinking and the willingness to explain their reasoning. By the end of KS2, the children achieve very good standards in mathematics and are working at a level in line with, or above, their ability.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 PLANNING

The planning across the curriculum provides an effective framework for progression, appropriate challenge and creative engagement for the children. A particular strength is the excellent planning for connected learning topics which ensures the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum. The teachers evaluate their planning regularly. In the FS, the teachers need to develop a systematic approach to observations in order to inform future planning.

3.2 TEACHING

The quality of the teaching observed was always good or better, with a quarter of the lessons being outstanding.

In the most effective practice, there was a clear sharing of learning intentions and success criteria and the lessons were well paced and purposeful. Through effective questioning, the teachers challenged the children's thinking, deepened their understanding of key concepts and promoted the development of their oral literacy. Lessons were frequently investigative and enquiry-led; with teachers listening well and building on children's responses. The teachers used the plenary effectively to extend the children's understanding and to provide opportunities for them to evaluate their own learning.

3.3 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The quality of the provision to support children who require additional support with aspects of their learning is good. The Special Educational Needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and the staff have a strong commitment to meeting the needs of all these children. A key strength of the school's provision is the teachers' identification of children who are underachieving; the teachers have created 'step up' plans to target support for these children. In addition, the teachers plan 'quest' groups to promote challenge for the more able children. Overall, the children targeted for support make good progress as a result of the in-class support by the teachers and classroom assistants and the withdrawal sessions. The SENCO liaises effectively with a number of outside agencies to enhance further the provision for children with additional needs, including the beneficial support from the Children's Interdisciplinary Schools Team.

In the best practice observed, the teachers plan differentiated activities to meet the needs of all the children and evaluate their planning in light of the progress made by individual children. As the school has identified, this good practice needs to be embedded in all classes and the school needs to implement a systematic and rigorous approach to tracking the progress of these individual children.

3.4 ASSESSMENT

The school uses a comprehensive range of testing to record the children's attainment and demonstrate progress. The data is analysed and shared with the teachers in order to inform their planning and teaching approaches. The children's performance in the tests is also used effectively to help identify both low achievers and underachievers. Appropriately, the school has recently introduced assessments to baseline the children's attainment in order to monitor more accurately their progress.

In all classes, the teachers mark the children's work regularly. The quality of the written feedback is varied, but in the best practice the teachers' comments are constructive and help the children improve their work. At times, the comments build well on the children's self-assessment and support their deeper self-awareness. The school needs to embed this practice by developing an agreed policy on marking. During the inspection, there was evidence of very effective oral feedback provided for the children.

There are appropriate procedures in place for keeping the parents informed about their child's progress. The annual written reports provide the parents with a thorough evaluation of their child's progress and attainment in a range of curriculum areas, including Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 LEADERSHIP

The overall quality of leadership and management is very good.

The Principal has been in post since 2009; in addition to her leadership role she has a teaching responsibility two days each week. She demonstrates outstanding leadership; she has a clear vision for the school, articulated by the mission statement of 'Traditional values; future thinking', with the care and achievements of the children very much at its core. She has led the development of exemplary practice in the promotion of thinking skills across the school.

4.2 PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

Through rigorous self-evaluation, the Principal has gained a robust, strategic overview of the life and work of the school. The school development planning process is well embedded with all staff and the co-ordinators have appropriate action plans to bring about improvement in the key areas of the school. An appropriate School Development Plan (SDP) is in place and is clearly focused on raising further the standards achieved by the children through effective learning and teaching. The SDP is compliant with the requirements of the School Development Plans Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.

4.3 RESOURCES, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The school governors work closely with the Principal to ensure that all aspects of the life and work of the school are kept under review.

It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the children and the staff.

4.4 ACCOMMODATION

The school building and surrounding grounds are maintained to a high standard and provide a pleasant working environment for the staff and children.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The strengths of the school include:

- the exemplary behaviour of the children who respond enthusiastically to the creative and challenging learning opportunities provided by the teachers;
- the very good quality of the pastoral care provided for the children;
- the very good standards achieved by the children in literacy and numeracy;
- the quality of the teaching observed, one quarter of which was outstanding;
- the promotion and development of thinking skills and connected learning across the school; and
- the outstanding leadership of the Principal who is well supported by her hard-working staff.

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 learners; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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